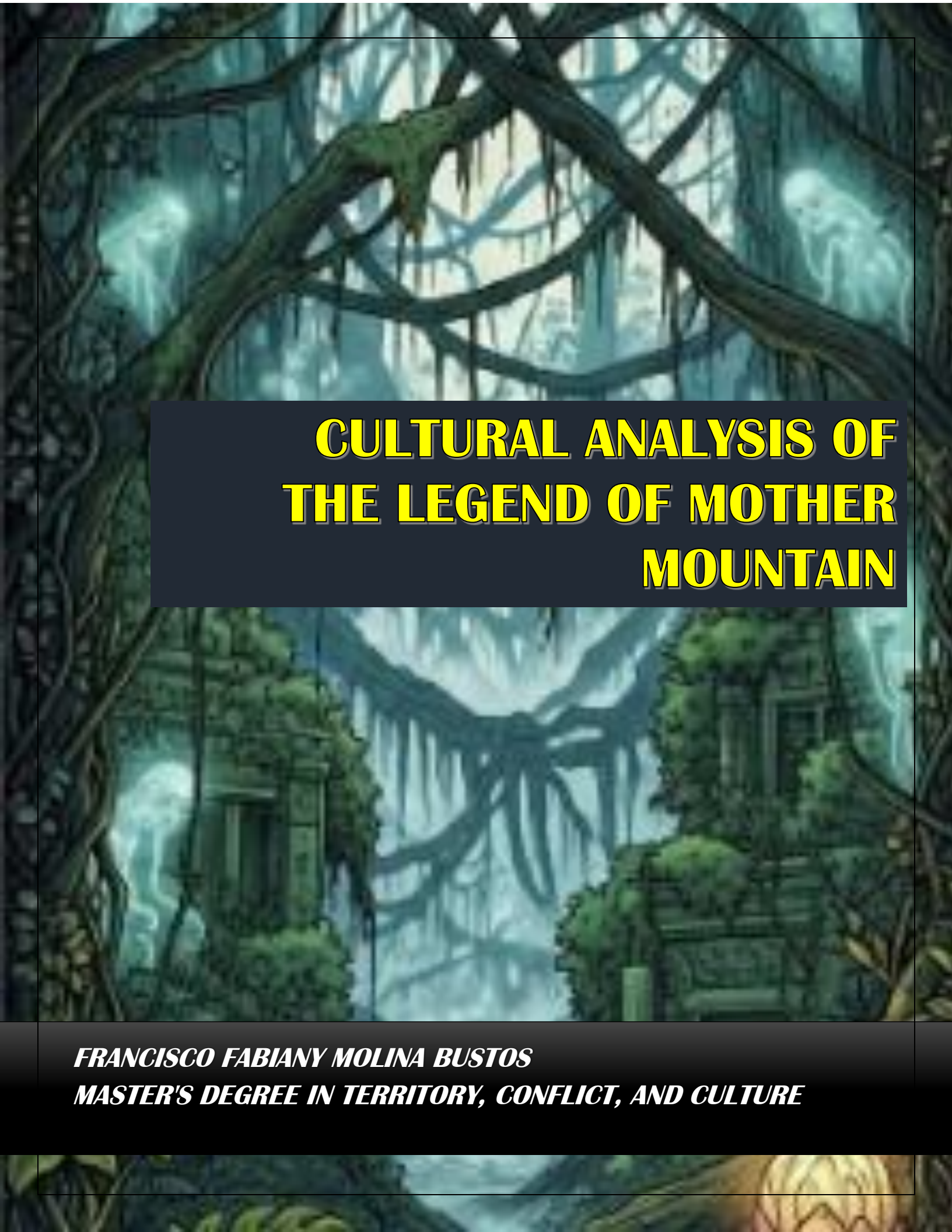

CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE LEGEND OF MOTHER MOUNTAIN

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PREFACE

The study of myths and legends represents a necessary exercise in understanding the mechanisms by which societies structure their collective imaginations, preserve their cultural memory, and reproduce their fundamental values. In this context, the legend of Mother Monte occupies a central place in the Colombian symbolic framework, not only as an ancestral narrative transmitted orally, but as a true intangible cultural heritage that articulates memory, territory, and social norms.

The legend of Mother Monte, deeply rooted in popular tradition, constitutes much more than a cautionary tale or a literary exercise in oral tradition. It represents a device for ethical and ecological regulation that, as Mircea Eliade (1959) points out, not only narrates the origin of certain phenomena but also establishes exemplary models of behavior. From this perspective, the myth functions as a founding story, where symbolic elements are combined to guide the relationship between humans and nature. Mother Monte, as a protective and sanctioning figure, warns of the dangers of excess, greed, and disrespect for ecological limits, establishing a community ethical model.

Through its normative nature and its connection to the territory, the legend reinforces the local and regional identity of diverse rural communities, as Néstor García Canclini (1999) suggests, emphasizing that traditional narratives not only preserve the past but also allow for the renewal of collective identities. Mother Mountain is not a static myth; it is a dynamic narrative, continually reinterpreted by the social and ecological changes experienced by Colombian rural communities. Therefore, its function is not limited to warning about the dangers of nature, but extends its reach to preserve a sense of territorial belonging, where landscape and culture are deeply intertwined.

This story also embodies the pedagogical dimension that Claude Lévi-Strauss (1964) attributes to myths as symbolic structures that allow for the resolution of social contradictions. The Mountain Mother, in her role as guardian of the mountains, waters, and animals, offers a narrative that symbolically resolves the tensions between economic

exploitation and ecological preservation. Her dual character—as a protective mother and as a vengeful force—activates a complex emotional field that, according to Carl Gustav Jung (1964), refers to the archetype of the Terrible Mother, allowing for the projection of collective fears and aspirations onto a mythical figure that structures the community's unconscious.

From a contemporary perspective, the legend has been reinterpreted in media such as literature, film, and digital social media, where its narratives are reconfigured to respond to current concerns surrounding the environment and sustainability. As Stuart Hall (1997) argues, cultural identities are not fixed, but are constantly negotiated and reinterpreted based on contemporary social and political dynamics. Mother Mountain, transformed into a symbol of environmental struggle, today offers a space for convergence between tradition and modernity, between ancestral memory and contemporary ecological struggles.

The preservation of this legend as cultural heritage is therefore essential not only for the continuity of the oral tradition, but also for the symbolic and ecological sustainability of the rural communities that tell and recreate it. Its intergenerational transmission, its adaptability to new formats, and its symbolic power make it a relevant, necessary, and profoundly educational tale, whose primary function is not only to narrate but also to raise awareness of the ethical responsibility that human beings have toward the natural balance.

Thus, this preface invites us to reread the legend of Mother Monte, not as a simple folkloric vestige, but as a living cultural heritage, whose narratives continue to shape the social, ethical, and environmental consciousness of Colombian communities. In a world where ecological degradation and the loss of a sense of belonging have become global problems, this myth offers a paradigmatic example of how ancestral memory and popular creativity can become relevant tools for strengthening cultural identity, community sustainability, and environmental education, reminding us that intangible heritage resides not only in the stories of the past, but also in their capacity to connect with the needs of the present.

The Social and Community Function of the Legend of Mother Monte in Colombia

Legends, as popular narratives anchored in oral tradition, constitute fundamental vehicles for transmitting values, regulating behavior, and preserving collective identity. In Colombia, the legend of Mother Mountain represents one of the most significant manifestations of national folklore, particularly in rural and mountainous regions. This mythical figure, conceived as the personification of nature and the mountains, embodies a complex system of meanings through which rural communities articulate their social relations and ties to the land. The social and community functionality of this legend is revealed through its ability to reinforce collective values, social norms, and cultural practices, as well as to sustain community identity in contexts of strong territorial roots.

According to Mircea Eliade (1959), myth "tells how a reality, be it an object, an institution, or a behavior, originated, thus establishing an exemplary model for human behavior." The legend of Mother Mountain functions in this sense as an exemplary tale that regulates the interaction between people and the environment, establishing an ethic of respect for natural resources. This figure appears as a protective force for the mountains and rivers, punishing those who, through greed or carelessness, transgress ecological limits. Such narratives, far from being simple tales of superstition, operate as symbolic regulators of social behavior, in the terms proposed by Bronislaw Malinowski (1948), who argues that myths fulfill pragmatic functions, legitimizing norms and providing social explanations that reinforce group cohesion.

In this legend, the normative elements are explicit: Mother Monte punishes those who harm nature, abuse water resources, or disrupt environmental balance. This sanctioning nature promotes behaviors of ecological preservation and community respect, turning the myth into an instrument of informal social control. In his analysis of the normative value of myths, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1964) posits that mythical structures allow for the symbolically

resolved social contradictions, such as the tensions between economic exploitation and environmental preservation. Mother Monte resolves this tension by imposing supernatural punishments on those who disrupt natural harmony, thus reaffirming the primacy of ecological balance as a central value.

Through this legend, the community also constructs and reinforces its territorial identity. As Néstor García Canclini (1999) points out, folk tales and intangible heritage "allow communities to strengthen their sense of belonging by taking root in collective memory and shared symbolic landscapes." Mother Mountain is not just a fantastical character, but an embodied symbol of the mountainous and riverine territory, representing the sacred space of the mountain as the core of community life. In this way, the myth articulates a form of ecological identity in which the community recognizes itself as an integral part of the natural environment, beyond a simple utilitarian relationship with it.

From a contemporary perspective, the legend also serves a pedagogical function. Research such as that by Valentina Montoya (2018) on cultural ecology in Colombia highlights that Mother Monte continues to be used as an educational tool in rural areas, teaching about the importance of conserving local ecosystems. Her figure appears in stories told to children and young people as a warning about the risks of environmental destruction, reflecting her relevance as a mechanism for community ethical development.

On the other hand, the legend also reinforces social norms related to justice and reciprocity. Mother Monte not only protects nature but also sanctions greed, usury, and abuse toward other members of the community. Jesús Martín-Barbero (1987) argues that folk tales in Latin America function as spaces where social tensions are negotiated, serving as mirrors that reflect community struggles for justice and the common good. Mother Monte, as a sanctioning figure, represents the collective memory of social norms, reaffirming values such as equity, mutual respect, and collective responsibility.

Furthermore, myth activates a deep emotional dimension that ensures its intergenerational transmission. According to Carl Gustav Jung (1964), myths and archetypes serve a function

in the collective psyche, allowing communities to project their fears and aspirations onto symbolic figures. The Mountain Mother embodies the archetype of the Terrible Mother, the one who nurtures and destroys, nurtures and punishes, allowing communities to channel their ambivalent emotions toward nature and social justice.

Finally, it is important to recognize how the legend has undergone processes of redefinition in contemporary times. As Stuart Hall (1997) argues, myths do not remain static, but are continually reinterpreted and adapted to new social contexts. Today, Mother Mountain is not only a folkloric symbol but also an emblem of environmental struggles and community campaigns for ecological conservation. In this sense, the myth has been reactivated as a current cultural device that accompanies pedagogical, environmental, and territorial reclamation processes in rural communities.

Thus, within the symbolic framework that makes up the legend of Mother Monte, a complex system of values, norms, and identities unfolds, deeply intertwined with Colombian community life. This legendary figure lives on not because she is tied to a superstitious past, but because she continues to offer ethical and social responses to current concerns about the relationship between human beings and the environment. Her relevance lies precisely in her ability to act as a symbolic mediator between the community, nature, and collective memory, revealing how folk tales, far from being mere fantasies, constitute living tools for learning, cohesion, and cultural resistance.

ANCESTRAL MYTHICAL WISDOM

In the Colombian context, the legend of Mother Monte stands as a deeply symbolic narrative, with roots that transcend oral tradition to become a true social device of teaching, warning, and moralizing. Her figure, enveloped in the lushness of the forest and the thickets of the rivers, represents a model of community regulation where norms of coexistence with nature are preserved and codes of conduct are reinforced. This story, present in various rural regions, acts as a tool of social and pedagogical control, projecting a normative framework that remains in the collective memory. Through a theoretical analysis of myths and a dialogue with classical ethical systems such as Aristotelianism, Kantianism, utilitarianism, and Stoicism, it is possible to demonstrate how the legend of Mother Monte fulfills a social function that articulates teachings, warnings, and moral values in the communities where it survives.

Mircea Eliade (1959) argues that myth offers an exemplary model and establishes a precedent that legitimizes community norms, thus constituting a repeatable pattern. Mother Mountain, as a founding myth, represents a moral boundary in the relationship between humans and nature. Its pedagogical function emerges from the warning about the consequences that fall on those who threaten ecological balance, whether through deforestation, pollution, or the abuse of water resources. The threat of punishment, which includes illness, loss, or misplacement, functions as a mechanism of collective prevention and a means of internalizing prudence and respect. From the perspective of Bronislaw Malinowski (1948), this function reflects the pragmatic role of myth in traditional societies, where it operates as an instrument of regulation and practical teaching.

The normative nature of the myth is also articulated through the symbolic structure that Claude Lévi-Strauss (1964) assigns to oral stories, where binary oppositions—civilization and nature, excess and balance, respect and immoderation—allow for the organization of community thought. Mother Mountain embodies the corrective force that punishes excess and protects the forest, operating as a symbolic mediator between the community and the

territory. This reveals her moralizing role, as she proposes an implicit code of conduct that regulates human action, reinforcing the need for self-control and balance.

From an Aristotelian perspective, the legend can be read as a manifestation of the doctrine of the golden mean. Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics, Book II) argues that virtue consists in finding a balance between extremes, and Mother Monte warns precisely of the dangers of excess, promoting an ideal of moderation. The myth acts as a reminder of the harm caused by hubris —human arrogance or excess in the face of nature—and teaches that respect and moderation are essential virtues for community life. Kantian ethics, for its part, provides another dimension to the analysis. Kant (1785), in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* , argues that morality must be based on duty and goodwill, regardless of the consequences. Mother Mountain can be interpreted as a symbolic externalization of the duty toward nature, where the mythical warning reinforces the moral obligation to respect the environment, not only out of fear of punishment, but because of a recognized rational duty toward natural and social balance.

From a utilitarian perspective, whose fundamental principle is the maximization of collective well-being, the legend is configured as a mechanism that, through fear and teaching, promotes a greater common good. Jeremy Bentham (1789) and John Stuart Mill (1863) argued that actions are correct if they tend to promote general happiness. In this case, Mother Mountain protects collective well-being by preventing destructive practices that would affect the community as a whole. The myth, then, becomes an instrument of deterrence that guarantees the sustainability of natural resources, thus ensuring collective utility.

From a Stoic perspective, the legend aligns with the pursuit of virtue as a life in conformity with nature. Epictetus (1st century AD) and Seneca (1st century AD) defended the need to accept natural laws as a guide to a virtuous life. Mother Mountain represents that immanent force that reminds human beings of their duty to live in moderation and respect the natural order. The punishment imposed by the myth is not a capricious act, but a restoration of the balance necessary for harmony between people and their environment.

Thus, the legend functions as a warning against excessive desires and as a reminder of the value of serenity and self-control.

Néstor García Canclini (1999) warns that popular myths fulfill a pedagogical function in the construction of community identity, since they transmit values, rules, and forms of coexistence. Mother Monte, by punishing disrespect and rewarding prudence, constitutes an ethical narrative that is part of daily learning in rural areas, operating as a symbolic school where the fundamental norms of community and ecological coexistence are learned. Furthermore, recent studies such as those by Valentina Montoya (2018) confirm that the legend continues to be transmitted as an educational tool, especially among children and adolescents, strengthening respect for the environment as the basis of social life.

In the final analysis, it is clear that the legend of Mother Monte transcends its role as a folk tale to consolidate itself as a social regulation mechanism that teaches, warns, and moralizes. Through the symbolic threat of punishment, the myth educates the community about the importance of restraint, responsibility, and environmental protection, connecting oral tradition with ethical principles ranging from Aristotelian moderation to Kantian duty, including collective utility and Stoic serenity. Its relevance demonstrates that ancestral stories, far from being mere vestiges of the past, continue to play an active role in the construction of moral and social order. For many communities, Mother Monte continues to be the living embodiment of ancestral wisdom that articulates respect for nature, prudence in action, and the defense of collective balance as essential pillars for human coexistence.

Persistent Oral Inheritance

The legend of Mother Monte, one of the most representative myths of Colombian folklore, is a clear example of the vitality and permanence of oral tradition as a mechanism of cultural transmission. This tale, which personifies nature as a protective and punishing female figure, remains alive in the collective memory thanks to the intergenerational storytelling process, which goes beyond the simple repetition of stories. Mother Monte continues to be retold and reinterpreted across generations, especially in rural communities, as part of a complex symbolic framework that reinforces values, educates new generations, and preserves territorial identity. This continuity is neither accidental nor automatic; it is based on deep cultural dynamics that allow us to understand how a myth manages to remain relevant in changing social contexts.

From an anthropological perspective, Mircea Eliade (1959) argues that myths are not simply entertaining tales, but rather narrative structures that allow societies to reaffirm their worldview and reconstruct their ties to the past. In this sense, the legend of Mother Monte functions as an "exemplary model" that offers symbolic responses to recurring problems, such as the relationship with nature and respect for community boundaries. The process of oral transmission ensures that the story retains its symbolic power, as it is constantly updated through the lived experience of the narrative. This turns the myth into a bridge between generations, where the elders teach the young the warnings, lessons, and mysteries that the mythical figure holds.

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1964), in his structuralist theory, posits that myths, when told, not only preserve historical memory but also organize collective thought through recurring narrative structures. The legend of Mother Monte continues to be told in rural and peasant communities in Colombia, not simply as an act of repetition, but as a way of structuring everyday experience. Oral transmission allows the story to adapt to new contexts without losing its essence, thus facilitating its durability over time. This reinforces the idea that the

legend is not a static narrative, but a flexible structure that evolves with the needs and fears of each generation.

Néstor García Canclini (1999) offers a perspective from the theory of cultural hybridization, emphasizing that oral narratives not only preserve the past but also recreate it based on contemporary social dynamics. In the case of Madre Monte, oral transmission has allowed the legend to survive, adapting to different formats and spaces: from rural bonfires to educational programs and environmental campaigns. This versatility is one of the factors that explain its generational continuity, as the story transforms according to the social concerns of the moment, while maintaining its central themes of respect, fear, and balance with nature.

The theory of cultural transmission also offers valuable tools for understanding this phenomenon. Edward Burnett Tylor (1871), a pioneer in cultural studies, argued that culture is a "complex whole that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, and customs" that are socially transmitted. The legend of Mother Mountain fully fulfills this function, as it is part of the "intangible heritage" inherited through oral tradition. Through generational transmission, the myth not only communicates a story but also reproduces a system of values and a way of seeing the world where nature occupies a sacred place.

For his part, Pierre Bourdieu (1980) introduced the concept of " habitus " to explain how social practices, including oral narratives, are almost automatically incorporated into everyday life. The transmission of the legend of Mother Monte is part of this habitus , since it is told in family and community spaces as part of everyday life, especially during agricultural activities, local celebrations or informal school spaces. The constant repetition, accompanied by the symbolic authority of older storytellers, reinforces its social legitimacy and facilitates its learning as practical knowledge that organizes the relationship with the environment.

Furthermore, Walter Ong (1982) highlights the importance of primary orality as a form of knowledge in which collective memory is kept alive through direct storytelling. The legend

of Mother Monte, as an oral tale, preserves a type of ecological and social knowledge that is not necessarily found in books, but rather in the spoken word, the tone, the gestures, and the community context of the narrative. This oral dimension is key to understanding its durability, since it is not limited to an act of communication, but constitutes a ritual of cultural transmission where shared emotions, fears, and teachings are reproduced.

perspective of contemporary theories of intercultural communication. Bhabha (1994) argues that culture is kept alive through processes of repetition and symbolic translation, where oral narratives allow for the constant negotiation between tradition and modernity. In this context, Mother Mountain has been reinterpreted as a symbol of environmental struggle, integrating into discourses of sustainability and community resistance. This reinterpretation, far from weakening tradition, strengthens it, as it allows the legend to be appropriated by new generations as an emblem of local identity and ecological awareness.

In light of these theoretical perspectives, the oral transmission of the legend of Mother Mountain reveals its importance as a cultural strategy that articulates memory, ethics, and territorial belonging. The story continues to be told from generation to generation because it fulfills essential functions for community life: it teaches us to fear and respect nature, reinforces social norms of reciprocity and care, and preserves collective identity in the face of social change. It is not simply a myth that survives by inertia, but an active narrative that, through words, continues to shape the perception of the world in those who hear it. The generational continuity of this story demonstrates that oral tradition is, in essence, an act of cultural resistance and a permanent exercise in collective reinterpretation, where the past and the present interact to keep ancestral wisdom alive.

Andean Narrative Metamorphosis

The legend of Mother Monte, rooted in Colombian oral tradition, represents a complex cultural phenomenon that has managed to survive and reconfigure itself over time, adapting to the social, technological, and media changes of the 21st century. This story, which personifies nature as a protective and punishing feminine force, has transcended its original format of oral transmission to be projected into new cultural spaces such as literature, film, animation, and, more recently, digital social media. Analyzing this adaptation process involves not only observing the narrative flexibility of the myth but also understanding the cultural and social dynamics that make it possible, from classical theories of cultural transmission to contemporary readings that, like those of David Harvey, analyze the fragmentation of social capital in contexts of territorial dispossession and symbolic reconfiguration.

Edward Burnett Tylor (1871), in his founding conception of culture, argued that cultural practices are transmitted as a "complex whole" that includes beliefs, customs, and collective knowledge, replicated from generation to generation. The legend of Mother Mountain, which for centuries was transmitted orally in the fields and mountains of Colombia, today finds new platforms of expression thanks to technology, without losing its central symbolic value. This process demonstrates how ancestral stories can be reconfigured to respond to contemporary sensibilities while maintaining their pedagogical and moralizing capacity. Literary and cinematic adaptations of the legend reinterpret its meaning, updating the conflict between humanity and nature from new aesthetics and narrative codes.

From a structuralist perspective, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1964) posits that myths function as thought structures that can adapt to different cultural contexts, while always preserving their mediating function between fundamental opposites. Thus, in digital and audiovisual

versions of Mother Monte, the figure continues to represent the boundary between what is permitted and what is prohibited, although the formats have changed. Today, Mother Monte is reimagined in children's stories, animated series, video games, and short films, where her role as an ecological guardian and sanctioner of human excess is maintained. These stories, disseminated through social media, allow the myth to reach urban and global audiences, articulating new forms of environmental awareness and symbolic justice.

Pierre Bourdieu (1980) points out that cultural transmission is not merely a mechanical act of repetition, but an active process of reconfiguring meanings within the "social field." The current circulation of the legend in digital media is not a simple transfer of formats, but a redefinition of the myth in relation to contemporary struggles. For example, some environmental movements have revived the figure of Mother Mountain as a symbol of ecosystem defense, integrating her into educational campaigns, digital publications, and artistic performances. These uses demonstrate how cultural transmission also involves a political dimension, where the legend operates as a vehicle for community resistance against the threats of extractivism and environmental destruction.

Walter Ong (1982), analyzing the transition from orality to writing and technology, highlights that oral stories, when they migrate to digital formats, do not necessarily lose their power, but rather transform into new "secondary oralities," where the narrative adapts to the dynamics of immediacy and fragmentation characteristic of digital media. The legend of Mother Monte, upon entering the digital universe, retains its pedagogical character, but also undergoes mutations: its presence in memes, Twitter threads, TikTok videos, or transmedia narratives allows it to go viral, but also introduces new readings, some for humorous purposes and others as social criticism.

A critical reading of this process from the perspective of dispossessed social capital, proposed by David Harvey (2003), offers a fundamental framework for understanding the political background of this reconfiguration. Harvey argues that, in contexts of accumulation by dispossession, communities' social capital—their support networks, their knowledge, and their shared symbols—tends to be displaced or commodified. However, the

redefinition of Mother Mountain in digital spaces can be read as a form of symbolic recomposition in the face of territorial and ecological dispossession. By reappropriating this myth, rural, peasant, and peripheral urban communities not only preserve their cultural memory but also rearticulate a narrative of resistance to environmental destruction and social marginalization.

This process also engages with Néstor García Canclini's (1999) theory of cultural hybridization, which emphasizes that contemporary cultures do not simply preserve the old, but rather hybridize narratives and formats to construct new identities. In this sense, the legend of Mother Monte becomes a hybrid symbol that engages tradition and modernity. Its circulation on social media and digital platforms not only allows new generations to become familiar with it, but also opens a space for critical reflection on current socio-environmental conflicts, connecting ancestral memory with contemporary struggles for ecological and territorial justice.

Thus, the legend of Mother Monte is not simply a folkloric vestige adapted for modern entertainment. Its transition to literature, film, and digital environments represents a dynamic of active cultural transmission, where collective memory intertwines with contemporary technologies to continue fulfilling vital social functions. The myth, when transformed into multiple formats, preserves its symbolic power as a warning and teaching, but also acquires new dimensions as a tool of resistance against environmental and social dispossession. This ability to reinvent itself and circulate in physical and virtual territories demonstrates that oral tradition does not disappear in the face of technological modernity, but rather finds new paths to persist, dialogue, and resistance. Mother Monte, in its various versions, remains a threshold between past and present, between the ancestral voice and the digital word, between memory and living struggle.

SACRED ECOLOGICAL IMAGINARY

The legend of Mother Monte occupies a central place in the Colombian cultural imagination, consolidating itself as a story that articulates symbolic, ecological, and social dimensions deeply rooted in the collective memory of different regions of the country. This narrative, in addition to its warning and moralizing function, deploys a complex system of symbols that codify the relationship between the community and its natural environment, condensing elements such as animals, objects, and territories that configure a dense representation of the human connection with nature. Analyzing these symbolic elements from a semiotic perspective and in light of Serge Moscovici's theory of social representations allows us to understand how Mother Monte functions as a cultural device that organizes meanings, shapes behaviors, and reproduces collective visions of the territory.

From a semiotic perspective, Roland Barthes (1972) argues that myths operate as systems of signification where signs not only refer to an immediate meaning but also produce "second meanings" charged with ideology and culture. In the legend of Mother Mountain, symbolic elements play a key role in the construction of the myth as a social message. One of the main symbols is the mountain itself, understood as a sacred and feared territory, a liminal space where Mother Mountain exercises her power. This territory is not only a physical space but a representation of the natural order, of abundance, and of limits that must not be transgressed. The mountain acts as a symbol of mystery, danger, and ecological sacredness.

Another fundamental symbolic element is the animals associated with the story. Mother Mountain is often accompanied or associated with snakes, jaguars, owls, and other wild creatures that, in the rural worldview, represent the ancestral power of nature. These animals, loaded with archaic meanings, reinforce the wild and untamed character of the myth. Snakes, for example, evoke fertility, the protection of water, and cyclical renewal, while felines represent the strength, stealth, and implacable justice of the mountain. These

animal symbols are not accessories, but extensions of Mother Mountain's power, projecting her vigilance over those who dare to transgress the environmental balance.

In addition to animals, the legend includes objects with a high symbolic charge. Mother Monte's large hat and staff are emblems of her authority and wisdom. The hat, which covers her face, represents the secrecy, invisibility, and anonymity of the natural power that manifests without warning. Her staff, on the other hand, symbolizes control over the elements, the ability to direct rain, drought, and flooding. These objects act as signs that reinforce the regulatory and sanctioning dimension of the myth, articulating a visual discourse that legitimizes its function within the oral narrative.

From the theory of social representations, Serge Moscovici (1984) argues that these narratives are not only individual stories, but shared forms of knowledge that allow communities to interpret and confront their daily reality. Mother Mountain, as a social representation, serves the function of translating concrete concerns—such as water conservation, respect for forests, or ecosystem protection—into powerful symbols that guide collective behavior. The myth is not limited to telling a story; it shapes a collective way of understanding the territory and relating to its constituent elements.

Likewise, Moscovici argues that social representations function as "guides for action," organizing the daily practices of communities. The figure of Mother Mountain operates as a symbolic framework that induces behaviors of respect, self-control, and prudence. By identifying the territories or objects associated with the myth, people modify their behavior, avoiding environmental damage or acting cautiously in areas considered sacred or dangerous. This type of representation not only maintains its deterrent function but also preserves ancestral knowledge about natural cycles and the importance of conserving wildlife spaces.

In analyzing the symbolic elements of Mother Mountain, it becomes clear that the myth condenses multiple levels of meaning. The mountain as a sacred space, the animals as guardians of balance, and the objects as emblems of power configure a narrative system

that not only entertains or warns, but also codifies environmental knowledge, social relations, and community perceptions of risk and justice. This symbolic charge, far from being static, is constantly activated in everyday practice, transmitted through oral tradition, memory, and community rituals as a mechanism of ethical and social regulation.

The permanence and strength of the myth are explained, then, by its ability to articulate symbols that represent both the power of nature and the ethical limits of human behavior. Its effectiveness lies in the fact that each element—animal, object, or territory—functions as a sign that organizes collective meaning, maintaining ecological and territorial awareness in Colombian rural communities. Mother Mountain, as a living story, remains a symbolic framework that, through semiotics and social representations, continues to shape the worldview of those who inhabit and respect the mountains, rivers, and secrets of the landscape. These elements not only structure the myth, but also allow the legend to retain its educational value, its protective function, and its cultural relevance in contemporary Colombia.

SYMBOLS OF THE SACRED MOUNTAIN

The legend of Mother Monte, deeply rooted in the Colombian popular imagination, constitutes a symbolic representation where animals, objects, and territories converge as signs laden with ethical, social, and cultural meanings. This myth, widely disseminated in rural areas, not only functions as a moral warning or community teaching tool, but also constitutes a complex symbolic system that structures the relationship between the community and nature. Analyzing the symbolic elements of this story requires approaching it from conceptual frameworks that integrate moral philosophy and the theory of archetypes, particularly from Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, where myths shape universal ethical representations and expressions of ideal models.

In legend, the territory is the primordial symbol. The mountain, a dense and impenetrable forest, represents much more than a physical space; it embodies the threshold between the known and the unknown, the permitted and the forbidden. From a symbolic reading, the mountain is the stage where the natural order manifests itself, as opposed to the human order. Roland Barthes (1957) argues that myths are "systems of communication" where spaces and objects are invested with secondary meanings, becoming carriers of ideology. In this sense, the mountain is not merely a landscape, but a symbol that reflects the sacredness of nature and the need to maintain an ethical balance with the environment.

Within this space, Mother Monte exercises her power through a series of iconic objects, which also carry profound symbolic meaning. The giant hat and staff that Mother Monte carries reinforce her image of ancestral authority. The hat, which obscures her face, symbolizes the mystery and invisibility of punishment, a reminder that natural justice operates beyond human control. The staff, meanwhile, represents dominion over the natural elements: with it, Mother Monte summons storms, controls the rain, and protects water sources. These objects are not mere narrative ornaments, but emblems that encapsulate the idea of sacred power, where the invisible and the natural merge to regulate human behavior.

The animals that accompany or surround Mother Mountain also serve an essential symbolic function. The serpent, frequently linked to the myth, represents ancestral wisdom and the constant vigilance of the territory. The jaguar, associated with ferocity and strength, embodies the punitive dimension of the myth, a symbol of imminent punishment for those who disturb the ecological balance. These creatures are not just fauna of the environment, but also embody moral archetypes that reflect the fear, wisdom, and justice inherent in nature.

From Platonic philosophy, these elements can be read as perceptual expressions of the higher Ideas or Forms. Plato (The Republic, Book X) proposes that myths fulfill an educational function by reflecting eternal moral truths in perceptible images. In this framework, the mountain, the animals, and the objects of Mother Mountain would be visible manifestations of universal archetypes such as justice, respect, and temperance. Thus, the myth not only entertains or warns, but also embodies an ethical pedagogy, where symbols transmit essential collective values.

Aristotle, for his part, offers a more practical vision oriented toward human behavior. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book II), he argues that virtue consists in the just balance between excesses, and myths operate as mechanisms of moral instruction to achieve this balance. The Mountain Mother, as a symbolic figure, exemplifies the need to moderate the human desire to exploit nature uncontrollably. Her symbols—the mountain, the staff, the animals—function as constant reminders of the importance of moderation and respect for the environment, guiding the community toward virtuous behavior through metaphor and visual representation.

Likewise, the theory of archetypes, later developed by Carl Gustav Jung (1959), expands this understanding by considering that the symbols present in myths activate universal patterns of the collective unconscious. The Mountain Mother, in this context, represents the archetype of the Great Mother, an ambivalent figure who nurtures and punishes, who protects and destroys. Her symbolic attributes evoke the duality inherent in the archetype:

the mountain as refuge and threat; the serpent as guide and guardian; the hat and staff as tools of hidden power and implacable justice.

The power of these symbolic elements also lies in their ability to produce concrete social effects. In everyday life, these symbols operate as boundary markers: mountain areas associated with the myth are respected or avoided; objects such as walking sticks or hats acquire connotations of power in rural areas; and animals linked to the legend become signs of warning or protection. This symbolic effectiveness reinforces the regulatory function of the myth in the community.

In short, the legend of Mother Mountain unfolds a symbolic framework that articulates territory, animals, and objects as tangible manifestations of profound ethical values. These elements not only shape the story but also operate as pedagogical, moral, and communal vehicles, where nature and human behavior are intertwined in a permanent balance. The mountain as sacred territory, the animals as archetypes of wisdom and justice, and the objects as emblems of power, activate in those who evoke them a profound sense of respect and prudence toward the environment. In this sense, Mother Mountain, more than a simple mythical character, remains a living expression of collective morality, a symbolic representation where the Platonic ethics of the ideal, the Aristotelian virtue of the golden mean, and the archetypal depth of the human unconscious converge, reminding us that myths are, in essence, mirrors of humanity's most persistent concerns.

GEOGRAPHIES OF ANCESTRAL FEAR

The legend of Mother Mountain, deeply rooted in Colombian oral tradition, constitutes a narrative expression that not only addresses moral and ecological aspects but also establishes a direct link with the territorial and geographic identity of diverse rural communities. This myth articulates a symbolic cartography where mountains, rivers, ravines, and forested areas are not simple geographical features, but spaces charged with social, emotional, and normative meaning. Analyzing the specific places linked to or explained by this legend reveals how the myth operates as a territorialization mechanism, where the story shapes behaviors, delimits spaces, and molds forms of attachment and social control over the territory.

From a sociocultural perspective, Clifford Geertz (1973) argues that culture is not a set of abstract rules, but rather a system of meanings that people use to interpret and make sense of their environment. The legend of Mother Mountain, in this sense, constructs meanings around specific territories, generating an emotional and regulatory bond between the community and its local geography. Areas such as the banks of the Magdalena, Cauca, Sinú, and Guaviare rivers, as well as the mountains and ravines of Antioquia, Tolima, Huila, and Santander, are referenced in the collective imagination as spaces where Mother Mountain resides or manifests. These places become symbolic nodes that not only explain natural phenomena, such as floods or overflows, but also delimit spaces of danger, respect, and restriction.

The approach of emotional attachment to territory, developed by Giuliani (2003), provides an in-depth look at this bond. According to Giuliani, people develop an emotional relationship with a space based on shared experiences, cultural meanings, and affective memories. Mother Mountain, as a mythical figure, embodies the emotional dimension of the Colombian landscape, as her legend activates collective feelings of fear, respect, and reverence toward certain places. This attachment is not only affective but also serves a

normative function: communities learn to respect and care for the places associated with the myth, knowing that any transgression could entail symbolic or material consequences.

Furthermore, from the perspective of spatial behavior and territorial control, Edward Soja (1989) argues that spaces are not neutral, but rather socially produced through everyday practices, discourses, and representations. The legend of Mother Mountain, by linking it to specific territories, delimits social behaviors and regulates uses of space. In local stories, the mountains where she lives are often considered restricted areas, where hunting, logging, or transit should not be allowed without permission or ritual measures of respect. These codes of territorial behavior are not imposed through state laws, but through the symbolic efficacy of the myth, which transforms fear into a form of social regulation.

Rivers and streams also play a central role in this symbolic geography. Mother Mountain is traditionally seen as the protector of water and the controller of its flow. According to narratives, when residents abuse water, pollute it, or divert its course, Mother Mountain causes flooding, swells, and storms as acts of punishment. Thus, these bodies of water are not simple natural resources, but living and sacred entities that demand respect. As Tim Ingold (2000) argues in his approach to environmental perception, landscapes are not merely a physical backdrop but a network of lived relationships, where rivers and mountains are integrated into everyday experience through stories and cultural practices.

In this context, myth acts as a spatial control device, where legend not only explains natural events but also defines how individuals should behave in certain places. The areas associated with Mother Mountain function as "liminal spaces," in Victor Turner's (1969) terms, where the usual rules of social life are suspended and other norms, mediated by symbolism, come into play. These areas, although seemingly accessible, require entry rituals and practices of respect that reproduce and reinforce community identity.

At the same time, the myth contributes to a form of emotional mapping of the territory. Older generations transmit to the new ones not only the story, but also a symbolic cartography of fear and caution, pointing out mountains, ravines, or paths where Mother

Mountain might appear. This mapping is not limited to avoiding danger, but also reinforces the historical memory of the territory, preserving environmental knowledge about risk zones, water sources, and local ecological corridors.

This type of mythical representation, in addition to creating emotional attachment and spatial control, preserves and revalues territorial identity. Mother Mountain cannot be understood outside the place where it is narrated; it is a myth that requires a specific geographical context to activate its meaning. Its connection to the mountains, rivers, and forests is not decorative, but rather constitutive of its symbolic efficacy and cultural persistence. The myth generates a sense of territorial belonging that also articulates forms of resistance to extractive projects, deforestation processes, and violent transformations of the landscape.

From this perspective, the legend of Mother Monte reveals its power as a narrative of symbolic territorialization. Through it, physical space is transformed into a socially charged place, where geographical elements acquire moral, affective, and normative value. The myth inextricably links identity, landscape, and behavior, articulating community life around specific territories that are not only inhabited but also venerated, feared, and respected. Thus, Mother Monte not only narrates the relationship with nature, but also delimits practices, reinforces senses of belonging, and preserves the memory of a territory where physical geography and symbolic geography are, in essence, inseparable.

Territories of Ancestral Belonging

The legend of Mother Mountain, widely spread in Colombian folklore, represents a tale that articulates the territorial and geographical identity of numerous rural communities in the country. Its permanence in oral tradition and its validity in the collective memory are not only due to its fantastical or moralizing character, but also derive from its ability to symbolically anchor people in their local and regional territories. This legend plays an essential role as a vehicle for constructing a sense of belonging, operating as a narrative matrix that organizes the connection between human beings and their geographical space,

through a symbolic framework that delimits, explains, and revalues the natural and cultural environments in which it is told.

From a sociocultural perspective, Clifford Geertz (1973) proposes that culture is a system of symbols through which human beings interpret their existence and give meaning to the world. From this perspective, myths like that of Mother Mountain are not peripheral stories, but rather central mechanisms of social structuring that shape the way people perceive and inhabit their space. The legend of Mother Mountain, closely associated with mountains, rivers, ravines, and forests, generates a meaningful perception of the landscape. This story transforms natural environments into spaces of community value, promoting a sense of belonging and rootedness that is not only emotional but also normative and ethical.

Areas such as the Magdalena River basin, the Cauca River valley, the mountainous foothills of Antioquia and Huila, or the jungles of Guaviare and Putumayo, are frequently mentioned as favorite settings for the legend. These areas are not merely physical settings where the myth takes place; they are living territories, steeped in memory, where the community recognizes its shared history and cultural roots. In this context, the myth becomes a "symbolic mapping" of the territory, as Tim Ingold (2000) puts it, stating that communities not only inhabit a physical space, but also interpret and reconstruct it through symbolic and narrative practices.

From the perspective of emotional attachment to territory, Giuliani (2003) argues that the sense of territorial belonging is structured through the repetition of shared experiences, the transmission of stories, and the construction of emotional ties with the space. The legend of Mother Mountain activates this type of attachment by evoking collective emotions linked to respect, fear, and admiration for certain natural spaces. By recounting the myth, rural communities not only convey a warning but also reinforce an emotional bond with their rivers, mountains, and trails, turning these spaces into landmarks of identity. This territorial attachment, strengthened by the myth, functions as an emotional anchor that preserves social cohesion and reinforces a sense of community.

Furthermore, the myth fulfills a regulatory function that can be analyzed from the perspective of spatial behavior and territorial control. Edward Soja (1989) argues that spaces are social constructions where symbolic and discursive practices play a central role in delimiting behavior. The legend of Mother Mountain operates precisely as a narrative device that regulates access to and use of certain territories. Places associated with the presence of Mother Mountain are identified as zones of respect, where it is necessary to act with prudence and care. The narrative establishes implicit norms regarding appropriate conduct in forests, riverbanks, and rural areas, functioning as a non-formal mechanism of territorial control.

In this way, the legend not only strengthens the sense of belonging through emotion and identity, but also through conduct and everyday territorial practices. Local stories warn of the dangers of transgressing the symbolic boundaries that Mother Mountain guards, reproducing an ethical code that is passed down through generations and maintains community cohesion. This normative function reinforces territorial identity, as it associates compliance with rules with environmental care and the preservation of collective well-being.

The intergenerational transmission of the legend also contributes to strengthening the sense of local and regional belonging. In the words of Serge Moscovici (1984), social representations are forms of shared knowledge that allow communities to orient themselves in their social and geographical world. Mother Mountain, as a social representation, structures a common framework for interpreting the territory, where each natural space is not seen in isolation, but as part of a collective narrative that explains the relationship between humans and nature. This shared framework promotes identification with the community and the territory, generating a sense of belonging based on collective memory and cultural practice.

By integrating sociocultural , emotional attachment, and spatial behavioral approaches, it is evident that the legend of Mother Mountain does not operate in isolation, but rather as a narrative that articulates multiple dimensions of the sense of territorial belonging. First,

it creates a symbolic landscape where natural elements acquire emotional, historical, and ethical value. Second, it promotes emotional attachment through the transmission of shared emotions and common experiences linked to the land. And third, it regulates social practices through the symbolic delimitation of spaces and the imposition of community norms of conduct.

On the other hand, myth also plays a crucial role in territorial defense against the dynamics of dispossession and landscape transformation. As David Harvey (2003) points out, in contexts of accumulation by dispossession, rural communities often resort to cultural and symbolic forms of resistance to preserve their territory. The legend of Mother Mountain can be read as one of these symbolic strategies, where emotional attachment to space and symbolic control of the territory contribute to the defense of local identity against processes of uprooting, deforestation, and extractivism . In this context, myth not only refers to the past, but is projected as a living tool of territorial and community affirmation.

Thus, a comprehensive analysis of the legend of Mother Mountain reveals its fundamental role in shaping the sense of local and regional belonging in Colombia. This narrative not only explains natural phenomena or conveys ethical values, but also articulates a complex web of meanings that strengthens the bond between the community and its territory. The mountain, the river, and the jungle, far from being simple geographical spaces, become places laden with meaning, where collective memory, emotional attachment, and the symbolic regulation of behavior intertwine to preserve community identity.

In Mother Monte, the symbolic, emotional, and normative dimensions of the territory converge, allowing her to remain relevant as a central narrative in many Colombian communities. The legend is not only a story of the past, but a means by which people continue to understand and defend their relationship with the space they inhabit. The myth revalues the local geography, promotes respect for the environment, and strengthens community cohesion, showing that the sense of belonging is not an abstract emotion, but a cultural, social, and practical construct that is reproduced through words, memory, and shared experience. In this context, Mother Monte remains much more than a mythical

figure; she is a living manifestation of the deep bond between people and their territory, a testament to the capacity of ancestral stories to sustain identity and belonging in times of change.

ANCESTRAL ETHICS OF THE MOUNTAIN

The legend of Mother Monte occupies a prominent place within Colombian cultural heritage, not only as a fantastical and supernatural story, but also as a complex symbolic system that articulates profound ethical and pedagogical dimensions. Through its narrative structure, this legend disseminates values and anti-values that regulate individual and collective behavior in rural communities, constituting a mechanism of moral socialization and social control. Analyzing this function from an academic perspective requires integrating theoretical approaches that allow us to understand how the myth operates as a pedagogical tool and as a transmitter of moral codes, especially from the perspective of pedagogical behaviorism, which explains learning through the association between stimuli, responses, and reinforcement.

Mother Mountain, as the central figure in the story, embodies an ethical power expressed in the protection of nature and the punishment of human behavior deemed inappropriate. Her legend warns of the consequences of acts such as indiscriminate logging, river pollution, disrespect for natural cycles, and excessive greed. These stories, according to Clifford Geertz (1973), are part of the "symbolic systems" that communities use to interpret the world and organize social life. In this sense, the myth functions as an effective means of moral teaching, where the values of respect, prudence, solidarity, and ecological balance are presented as fundamental elements for harmonious coexistence with the environment.

Among the most obvious values conveyed by the legend are respect for nature, moderation in the use of resources, community responsibility, and obedience to ancestral norms. These values are presented as essential conditions for avoiding the wrath of Mother Mountain, who acts as guardian of rivers, mountains, and wild animals. In the narrative's logic, failure to comply with these norms generates negative consequences, such as illness, disappearances, storms, or natural disasters. Thus, the myth reinforces learning by directly associating behavior with punishment, as proposed by behaviorist educators.

Based on the theory of behaviorist learning, B.F. Skinner (1953) argues that human behavior can be shaped through operant conditioning, where correct actions are positively reinforced and incorrect actions are punished through aversive consequences. Mother Mountain, as a mythical character, represents precisely this type of reinforcement. People who respect natural environments and act responsibly receive the symbolic reward of tranquility and safety, while those who violate community norms face supernatural punishment. This narrative structure produces lasting learning, as it generates behavioral habits that conform to social expectations through repetition and the internalization of the relationship between action and consequence.

Ivan Pavlov (1927), another exponent of behaviorism, proposes that learning can also occur through classical conditioning, in which a neutral stimulus (in this case, the mountain or the figure of Mother Mountain) is repeatedly associated with an aversive stimulus (punishment or illness) until an automatic response of fear or respect is generated. In many Colombian communities, this association has been so effective that certain natural spaces are avoided or treated with special care, not necessarily because of the actual presence of danger, but rather because of the symbolic force of the myth that surrounds them. This conditioning, transmitted orally through generations, shapes the perception of the territory and reinforces compliance with ecological and social norms.

In addition to the aforementioned values, the legend of Mother Mountain also promotes certain anti-values or ethical warnings about undesirable behaviors. These include greed, excess, arrogance, and the transgression of natural boundaries. These anti-values are exemplified through characters who, driven by a desire for wealth or power, defy the rules of the mountain and are severely punished. This negative teaching functions as a "model to avoid," as explained by Albert Bandura (1977) and his theory of social learning, in which individuals learn by observing the consequences others receive for their actions.

Bandura emphasizes that stories that describe the consequences of immoral actions have a high pedagogical value, as they allow listeners to internalize the norms without having to directly experience the punishment. Mother Monte, by presenting examples of people

punished for their recklessness or greed, promotes vicarious learning, where community members understand what behaviors they should avoid to remain in harmony with their environment.

On the other hand, legends also play a formative role in the transmission of environmental knowledge. Through stories, communities learn to identify natural cycles, ecological risk zones, and sustainable subsistence practices. This knowledge, integrated into the myth's value system, is transmitted through stories that illustrate the importance of respect for water, wildlife, and native vegetation. Thus, myths not only teach abstract norms but also offer concrete guidelines for territorial management and environmental conservation, in line with Lev Vygotsky's (1978) approach to the importance of the social context in learning.

Vygotsky points out that meaningful learning occurs through interaction with others and through cultural mediation, as evidenced by the oral transmission of the legend. In the communities where the story of Mother Monte is told, the story acts as a pedagogical mediator that articulates ethical norms, ecological knowledge, and forms of community behavior. The structure of the myth, with its clear distinction between virtuous and dangerous behavior, offers a learning framework where the values of respect, reciprocity, and self-control are internalized through words, experience, and emotion.

From this perspective, the myth also contributes to the development of self-control and personal discipline, two fundamental aspects of behaviorist education. By associating non-compliance with rules with severe punishments, the legend reinforces the need to self-regulate and act prudently. This learning, based on anticipating consequences, favors the formation of stable and adaptive behavioral habits, essential for social coexistence in rural environments where respect for the environment is key to survival.

The myth's relevance in contemporary Colombian culture demonstrates its ability to continue transmitting these values, even in contexts where social and technological transformations have altered traditional ways of life. In some cases, Mother Monte has been reconfigured in digital media or environmental education campaigns, maintaining its

pedagogical function and extending its reach to new generations. This demonstrates the flexibility of the myth as an ethical and educational tool, capable of adapting to different contexts without losing its symbolic effectiveness.

The ethical and pedagogical dimension of the legend of Mother Mountain shows how ancestral stories can act as powerful devices for moral and social learning. Through a narrative structure based on the relationship between action and consequence, the myth disseminates values such as respect for nature, moderation, community responsibility, and self-control, while warning against anti-values such as greed and excess. These lessons, mediated by symbolic fear and community identification, generate stable social behaviors that promote cohesion and ecological sustainability. The legend, beyond its function as entertainment or superstition, constitutes a true collective ethical manual, where emotions, tradition, and pedagogy converge to preserve not only environmental balance but also social harmony and cultural continuity.

MORALITY OF THE COLOMBIAN MOUNTAIN

The legend of Mother Monte constitutes a complex narrative device where mythical, pedagogical, and ethical elements converge, generating profound repercussions on the social practices and moral makeup of various rural communities in Colombia. This myth, which has endured through oral tradition, operates as a regulatory mechanism for social and ecological behaviors, clearly establishing which acts should be rewarded and those that, due to their transgressive nature, deserve punishment. From this perspective, the story is not only folkloric entertainment but also an educational tool that shapes behavior through the association between action and consequence, which connects directly with the postulates of pedagogical behaviorism, especially with the theories of classical and operant conditioning.

The ethical function of the myth focuses on the defense and protection of the natural environment, presenting Mother Mountain as a vigilant entity who rewards those who respect nature and punishes those who exploit or destroy it. In this sense, the myth is articulated with what Clifford Geertz (1973) calls "symbolic systems," through which communities interpret their world and give meaning to their daily experiences. Stories about Mother Mountain act as cultural models where human actions are evaluated through a moral prism, centered on environmental balance and harmonious coexistence with the land.

The behaviors that the legend rewards are those associated with respect for natural cycles, moderate use of resources, community cooperation, and obedience to ancestral norms. Respect for rivers, mountains, ravines, and forests, as well as gratitude toward the earth for its fruits, are presented as virtuous behaviors that ensure the protection of Mother Mountain. These values are positively reinforced through stories in which prudent and responsible people manage to navigate safely through natural spaces, obtain abundant harvests, or enjoy community health and prosperity. The myth thus reproduces a behavioral

model where the balance between human action and the ecosystem is an essential condition for collective survival.

From the perspective of pedagogical behaviorism, B.F. Skinner (1953) developed the concept of operant conditioning, in which learning occurs through the association between specific behaviors and their consequences. The legend of Mother Mountain functions as a story where rewards and punishments are central elements that guide behavior. People learn, through the myth, that their actions will have a direct effect on their well-being and that of the community. Respect for the environment, for example, is reinforced with the reward of tranquility and security, while transgression entails severe punishments such as illness, disappearances, storms, or the loss of material possessions.

In the same sense, Ivan Pavlov (1927), with his theory of classical conditioning, explains that emotional responses can be conditioned through the repeated association between neutral and aversive stimuli. In the legend of Mother Mountain, natural spaces such as mountains and rivers become stimuli laden with emotional significance, as they are constantly associated with the possibility of punishment. This type of association conditions automatic responses of respect and caution toward certain places, generating effective behavioral control that operates even in the direct absence of a specific physical threat.

The behaviors punished by the myth primarily include greed, environmental destruction, arrogance, and disrespect for community norms. Those who cut down trees uncontrollably, pollute water, hunt excessively, or invade sacred forest spaces are punished through the appearance of Mother Mountain, who can cause everything from straying into the forest to illness and personal misfortune. These punishments not only serve as a deterrent but also reinforce the collective perception that nature possesses its own moral agency, capable of sanctioning inappropriate human behavior.

Albert Bandura (1977), with his social learning theory, points out that people learn not only through direct experience but also by observing the consequences others receive. In the legend of Mother Monte, the stories about punished individuals function as experiential

examples that allow listeners to learn without having to face the punishment personally. This vicarious learning is essential to the pedagogy of myth, as it facilitates the intergenerational transmission of norms without relying exclusively on individual experience, broadening the educational scope of the story.

Beyond behavioral reinforcement, the legend also operates as a means of transmitting ecological knowledge. Through its narratives, specific practices are taught, such as the preservation of water sources, the responsible harvesting of fruits and plants, and respect for hunting and planting seasons. Lev Vygotsky (1978) argues that learning is a social process mediated by culture, in which stories and community practices play a fundamental role. In this context, Mother Mountain acts as a symbolic pedagogical agent who, through oral storytelling, instructs the community in observing environmental guidelines essential for sustainability.

From a behaviorist perspective, this type of learning is particularly effective because it combines cognitive, affective, and social elements. Fear of punishment, admiration for those who respect the rules, and observation of concrete examples converge in a comprehensive formative experience that shapes lasting behavioral habits. Myth teaches not only through emotions but also through the ritualized repetition of the story, which ensures its rooting in the collective consciousness.

On the other hand, Mother Mountain also promotes the development of self-control and individual discipline. By presenting the consequences of recklessness and excess, the myth teaches the importance of regulating one's actions, avoiding impulsive behaviors that can have negative effects both personally and communally. This emphasis on self-regulation aligns with the behaviorist goals of encouraging desirable behaviors through anticipating consequences and internalizing social norms.

In the pedagogical sphere, the myth remains relevant as a powerful educational tool, capable of adapting to new transmission formats such as children's literature, film, and environmental education campaigns. These new media revisit the story's core elements—

rewarding responsible behavior and punishing destructive acts—to reinforce its moral message in contemporary contexts. Thus, the legend not only endures as an oral tradition but also continues to function as an adaptable and effective pedagogical model.

The ethical and pedagogical dimension of the legend of Mother Monte demonstrates its profound impact on shaping community behavior in Colombia. By rewarding behaviors such as respect for nature, moderation in the use of resources, and community cooperation, and by punishing acts such as greed, environmental destruction, and disrespect for norms, the myth articulates a community environmental ethic that transcends generations. Its pedagogical effectiveness lies in the combination of fear, respect, and vicarious learning, elements that, from a behaviorist perspective, generate lasting learning through the association between action and consequence. This symbolic framework makes Mother Monte an essential figure for the transmission of ecological and social values, reminding us that education does not always occur in formal schools, but also in ancestral narratives that, through their punishments and rewards, shape morality and community coexistence in close connection with the land.

AESTHETICS OF THE RURAL STORY

The legend of Mother Monte, rooted in Colombian folklore, constitutes a tale that transcends its mere status as a popular myth to become a literary and aesthetic artifact of remarkable narrative complexity. Its relevance and intergenerational transmission are due not only to its ability to warn or regulate behavior, but also to the expressive richness and structural depth it presents in its multiple oral and written versions. Analyzing its aesthetics and narrative implies recognizing that this myth configures a symbolic universe where traditional orality, metaphor, symbolic polysemy, and a complex narrative architecture converge, reinforcing its cultural efficacy and literary value.

The starting point for evaluating the narrative structure of the legend of Mother Monte lies in the conception of literature as a system of aesthetic communication. As Roman Jakobson (1960) asserts, the poetic function of language lies not only in what is said, but in how it is said; that is, in the internal organization of the discourse, the selection of its elements, and the arrangement of its rhetorical resources. Within this framework, the myth of Mother Monte unfolds a narrative where the sequence of events, the construction of characters, and the evocation of the natural landscape are carefully assembled to produce a specific aesthetic effect, which transcends the moralizing and inscribes itself in the artistic.

The narrative structure of this myth is, indeed, highly complex and rich. Based on the theory of narrative structuralism, Vladimir Propp (1928) identified a series of recurring functions in folk tales that shape the internal architecture of the stories. Analyzing the legend of Mother Mountain from this perspective, it is possible to notice the presence of multiple narrative functions that reinforce its structural depth: the appearance of an initial harm or transgression (the disruption of the natural balance), the warning or revelation (the announcement of Mother Mountain's presence), the confrontation (the encounter with the mythical figure), and the resolution through punishment or redemption of the protagonist. This sequence not only gives the story internal coherence but also provides it with a rhythmic cadence that facilitates its memorization and oral transmission.

Another distinctive feature of the myth's narrative richness is its capacity to generate multiple levels of interpretation. Following Umberto Eco (1979), who points out that works with a high semiotic richness are those that admit of diverse readings, the legend of Mother Monte offers, simultaneously, ecological, moral, spiritual, and aesthetic readings. Each story is not limited to a single interpretation but opens up diverse paths to understanding the relationship between human beings and nature, the tensions between culture and the environment, and the moral dilemmas associated with power, greed, and community respect.

The literary richness of the legend is also evident in its ability to construct sensorial atmospheres and in the detailed treatment of the landscape. The use of detailed descriptions of the jungle, rivers, and mountains, as well as the sensorial characterization of Mother Mountain's presence—the smell of humidity, the sound of the wind through the trees, the thick fog that envelops the paths—form a narrative universe where the reader or listener not only understands the story but also experiences it sensorially. This aesthetic immersion is key to the myth's effectiveness and reinforces its potential for permanence in the collective memory.

From the perspective of literary theory, Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) highlights the importance of the "chronotope," that is, the spatio-temporal configuration of the story, as a structuring element of popular narrative. In the case of Mother Mountain, the chronotope is constructed from a precise geography: the humid forest, the riverbanks, the paths tangled with vegetation. This space is not a mere setting, but another character, loaded with symbolic and emotional meanings. The time of the story is also cyclical, linked to natural rhythms and the repetition of transgressive acts and their punishments, which accentuates the ritual character of the myth.

A central aspect of the legend's narrative richness is the flexibility of its characters. Mother Monte is not a one-dimensional figure; her representation oscillates between protector and punisher, between nurturing mother and vengeful force. This ambivalence, reminiscent of the archetypal figures described by Carl Gustav Jung (1959) in his theory of the collective

unconscious, gives the character a psychological depth that enriches the story. Mother Monte embodies the archetype of the dark mother and guardian of the threshold, condensing collective fears and desires linked to the mystery of nature and the need for social control.

Furthermore, the multiplicity of versions of the myth that coexist in different regions of Colombia adds an additional layer to its narrative complexity. As Paul Ricoeur (1984) argues, stories that are constantly reconfigured according to the cultural and social context display a hermeneutical vitality that turns them into "open texts." The legend of Mother Monte is precisely an open story, where local variations do not weaken its structure but rather enrich it, adapting to the environmental, social, and cultural specificities of each region. This capacity for adaptation reinforces its creative richness and turns it into a true narrative palimpsest.

From a more contemporary perspective, approaches have been developed that seek to measure and assess the literary and creative richness of folk tales. The narrative complexity index theory, proposed by Jerome Bruner (1991), argues that stories with a high literary richness exhibit characteristics such as the presence of moral conflicts, psychological depth of characters, symbolic density, and interpretive openness. Under these criteria, the legend of Mother Monte demonstrates a high narrative complexity: its plot is marked by ethical dilemmas related to environmental destruction and respect for nature; its characters, especially Mother Monte, possess a profound symbolic charge; and its ending, although punitive, leaves open multiple reflections on the relationship between human beings and their environment.

Furthermore, the story fulfills what Bruner calls "narrative transport," that is, the myth's ability to absorb the listener or reader into its symbolic universe, thus facilitating the internalization of its teachings and the reproduction of its structure in new narratives. This transportive capacity is not accidental; rather, it derives from the story's aesthetic richness, its internal rhythm, and the emotional power of its images.

Finally, it is worth noting that the narrative richness of the legend lies not only in its formal aspects, but also in its aesthetic function within the community. As Hans Robert Jauss (1977) points out in his theory of reception aesthetics, folk tales acquire their aesthetic value to the extent that they generate expectations, provoke emotions, and are integrated into everyday cultural practices. By being part of family evenings, community narratives, and school stories, La Madre Monte acts as an aesthetic catalyst that reaffirms collective identity, preserves historical memory, and fosters narrative creativity within the oral tradition.

Analyzing the legend of Mother Monte from its aesthetic and narrative perspective reveals its complex, rich, and deeply rooted story in Colombian culture. Its narrative structure combines elements of the cautionary tale with the symbolic richness of myth, offering multiple layers of interpretation that encompass the moral, ecological, and spiritual. Its literary construction, based on the masterful use of space, time, and the psychology of the characters, produces an aesthetic experience that transcends the mere transmission of social norms, generating a sensorial and emotional immersion in the listener or reader. This aesthetic character, far from being mere embellishment, is the very core that explains the story's endurance, as its formal beauty and transportive capacity ensure that it continues to be retold, recreated, and reinterpreted generation after generation. Thus, Mother Monte not only teaches or warns; it seduces, moves, and, above all, invites us to inhabit a narrative universe where words become a creative act and a bridge between memory, aesthetics, and the collective imagination.

LANGUAGES OF ANCESTRAL MYTH

The legend of Mother Monte, deeply embedded in the Colombian cultural repertoire, is not only an instrument of social control or a community pedagogical tool, but also a piece of notable aesthetic and literary value. Its narrative richness is evident not only in the story's internal structure but also in the recurrent use of stylistic devices such as metaphors, hyperbole, and, in some cases, subtle humor that enhances the myth's expressive power. These elements, far from constituting superficial embellishments, are fundamental mechanisms through which the story amplifies its communicative capacity, emotionality, and relevance, strengthening its impact both in oral tradition and in contemporary adaptations.

Myth, as Roland Barthes (1957) asserts, is not simply a naive tale, but a complex form of signification in which language operates as a structured system of signs. In this sense, Mother Monte uses various rhetorical resources that allow for the transmission of values, warnings, and worldviews, relying on figurative language that activates the imagination and memory. Metaphor is one of the most powerful resources in this legend, used to translate natural or social phenomena into images of great symbolic impact. The figure of Mother Monte herself is a living metaphor for nature: her body covered in moss, mud, and leaves symbolizes the forest as an active and vigilant entity. In Paul Ricoeur's (1975) terms, this figure operates as a "living metaphor" that not only embellishes the story but also generates a "new reference" through which the audience can understand the connection between humanity and nature.

This metaphorical use also extends to the landscape. The mountain is not described solely as a physical space, but as an impenetrable labyrinth, a "vegetal womb" or a "devouring mouth," metaphors that imbue the environment with an almost human agency, capable of welcoming or punishing depending on the actions of the traveler. These images construct a symbolic language in which respect or fear for the territory is internalized not through rational concepts, but through the aesthetic experience of the story.

Likewise, hyperbole plays a fundamental role in the narrative intensification of the legend. Vladimir Propp (1928), in his analysis of the morphology of the tale, points out that traditional stories frequently resort to exaggeration as a resource to amplify emotions and capture the listener's attention. In Mother Mountain, hyperbole is manifested in the description of punishments: enormous storms, sudden flooding of rivers, men swept away by the current for days, or Mother Mountain herself rising to disproportionate proportions. These exaggerations not only generate a dramatic effect but also reinforce the inescapable nature of punishment for transgressing ecological and social norms. In Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) terms, these hyperboles act as "ritualized grotesques," mechanisms where exaggeration is transformed into a tool for collective and emotional learning.

On the other hand, although the myth is primarily characterized by its solemn and instructive tone, it is also possible to identify moments where humor acts as a safety valve and aesthetic resource. This humor is not usually burlesque or satirical, but rather a subtle, ironic twist that emerges in local anecdotes where the stories' protagonists try to evade warnings and end up being ridiculed for their naiveté. This humorous dimension, according to Umberto Eco (1979), serves a strategic function within folk tales, allowing communities to ease the emotional burden of the warnings, reinforcing the lesson through laughter and empathy with the characters. In several oral versions of the myth, stories are told where the "brave" man who braves the mountain ends up in ridiculous or embarrassing situations, such as returning home covered in mud, disoriented, and stammering. This generates a collective laughter in the listeners that, at the same time, reaffirms the central moral of respect for the land.

From a literary and creative perspective, Jerome Bruner (1991) proposes that the narrative richness of a story is measured, among other factors, by its capacity to integrate diverse discursive strategies that generate "narrative transportation," that is, the emotional and imaginative absorption of the listener or reader. The Legend of Mother Monte amply fulfills this condition, as it organically combines powerful metaphors, dramatic hyperbole, and

subtle humor, generating an immersive experience where aesthetics and pedagogy are inextricably intertwined.

Furthermore, the legend reflects a flair for discursive polyphony, a characteristic highlighted by Bakhtin (1981), where different social voices are integrated into the story. Mother Mountain is not simply a linear narrative, but a tale where the voices of ancestral tradition, popular wisdom, and the critical or ironic gaze of local storytellers intersect, adapting the myth to each specific context. This interweaving of voices broadens the story's expressive scope, allowing it to resonate across generations and communities.

Another element that amplifies the creative richness of the myth is the ability to generate an “autonomous symbolic universe,” as Northrop proposes. Frye (1957) in his theory of literary archetypes. Mother Mountain, by integrating universal symbols such as Mother Nature, supernatural punishment, and the dangerous journey, creates a narrative microcosm that transcends the local and connects with universal patterns of literature and myth. This quality gives the story an almost unlimited potential for reinterpretation and adaptation, which explains its relevance in oral tradition as well as in literature, theater, and even audiovisual media.

The expressive flexibility of the legend is also evident in its adaptation to new narrative formats. In contemporary versions, metaphor and hyperbole are visually recreated through illustrations, animations, or theatrical performances, allowing the myth's reach to expand beyond the spoken or written word. This capacity for transmediality reinforces what Walter Ong (1982) calls the "second orality," where ancestral stories are revitalized in new media without losing their symbolic and aesthetic essence.

Finally, in terms of measuring literary richness, the legend of Mother Monte meets the main indicators of narrative complexity identified by scholars such as Bruner and Eco: discursive polyphony, symbolic density, interpretive flexibility, strategic humor, and a high degree of emotional transport. These elements make up an aesthetically complex and literary

valuable story, capable of provoking profound emotions, ethical reflections, and a revaluation of the bond between humanity and nature.

Exploring the aesthetics and narrative resources present in the legend of Mother Monte allows us to recognize it as a work of profound creative richness, where metaphor, hyperbole, and humor do not act as mere ornaments, but as essential tools for its transmission and permanence. These stylistic resources, masterfully articulated in the story, reinforce its emotional impact, facilitate its memorization, and enhance its pedagogical and cultural function. By integrating these expressive strategies, the legend offers not only a moral or ecological lesson, but a complete aesthetic experience that envelops the listener or reader in a vibrant and multisensory symbolic universe. Its permanence in Colombian culture is explained not only by its ability to transmit norms or values, but by the beauty of its narrative construction, the poetic power of its images, and its ability to seduce through words, revealing that in every metaphor, every exaggeration, and every smile provoked by humor, lies an ancestral wisdom that continues to connect communities with their memory, their landscape, and their collective imagination.

MUTATIONS OF THE MYTH

The legend of Mother Monte, inscribed in Colombia's collective memory, constitutes one of the most adaptable and resilient mythical tales in national folklore. Its endurance is explained not only by its symbolic meaning and its ecological warning function, but also by its extraordinary ability to adapt to the diverse historical, political, and social contexts the nation has endured. This myth has demonstrated remarkable narrative versatility, allowing different generations and social sectors to reinterpret it according to their needs, concerns, and worldviews. In this way, the legend becomes a "malleable narrative resource," as Paul Ricoeur (1984) suggests, capable of articulating itself with social and cultural transformations without losing its symbolic essence.

From an anthropological perspective, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958) argues that myth is a structure that operates as a "mediation model" between social or cultural opposites. Within this framework, the legend of Mother Monte functions as a device that regulates and explains the tensions between nature and society, between order and chaos, between the permitted and the prohibited. This mediating function allows it to reconfigure itself in response to social and political changes, without disappearing, but rather mutating its message and its intention.

During the colonial period, the myth of Mother Monte was closely linked to evangelization and the imposition of a Christian moral order. The figure of Mother Monte was adapted to symbolize divine punishment for greed, sin, and irreverence toward religious mandates, functioning as a tool of moral and social control. According to Serge Gruzinski (1991), during the colonial period, popular stories were instrumentalized to facilitate the assimilation of colonial values, which explains why Mother Monte acquired a "punitive spirit" in keeping with the dominant ecclesiastical ideology.

Later, during the 19th and 20th centuries, in the context of land struggles and the formation of the nation-state, the legend was reinterpreted as a symbol of resistance and territorial

roots. Various peasant communities reinterpreted Mother Mountain as a protector of ecosystems, an ally of rural inhabitants against the advance of large estates, mining, and extractive megaprojects. This adaptation connects with what James C. Scott (1990) calls "forms of infrapolitical resistance ," where mythical stories conceal critiques of power and safeguard forms of community autonomy. Mother Mountain, in this sense, embodies the spirit of the territory and operates as a symbol of defense against dispossession.

In contemporary urban contexts, the legend has also mutated, integrating into new social and environmental discourses. It has been reinterpreted as a metaphor for climate change and the urgent need to preserve ecosystems in the face of uncontrolled urbanization. According to Néstor García Canclini (1995), popular culture is characterized precisely by its capacity for "hybridization," that is, for blending the traditional with the modern to generate new forms of expression. Incorporating Mother Mountain into environmental campaigns, environmental literature, and urban audiovisual productions, Mother Mountain demonstrates its potential as a timely symbol, capable of engaging with current issues such as the water crisis, deforestation, and biodiversity loss.

From the theory of symbolic capital, Pierre Bourdieu (1984) points out that mythical stories survive not only for their aesthetic or literary value, but because they operate as tools of cultural distinction and social cohesion. In this context, La Madre Monte fulfills a dual function: on the one hand, it preserves rural and peasant memory, and on the other, it offers a narrative vehicle for the creation of new urban identities that seek to reconnect with nature or reclaim their cultural heritage. This phenomenon can be seen in cultural festivals, plays, youth literature, and digital narratives that reimagine the legend from a contemporary perspective.

The adaptive capacity of myth is also evident in its ability to represent different aspects of the human condition. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Carl Gustav Jung (1959) argues that mythic archetypes are "primordial images" that allow people to project their fears, longings, and internal conflicts. Mother Monte embodies the archetype of the Terrible Mother or the Great Mother, an ambivalent figure who offers protection but also imposes

relentless punishments. This archetype has a universal resonance, which explains its ability to connect with different audiences, allowing each listener or reader to project their own anxieties or hopes onto her.

At a theoretical level, the adaptive richness of the legend can also be understood from the narrative theory of Hayden White (1973), who maintains that every historical or mythical narrative is, in essence, a process of " employment ," that is, a way of organizing facts or symbols to give them coherence according to the expectations of the social context. Mother Monte has been "emplaced" in different ways throughout Colombian history: as a moral punishment in the Colonial period, as a territorial protector in the modern rural environment, as an ecological symbol in the present urban area, and as a psychological archetype on the individual level. This flexibility makes it a highly versatile narrative matrix.

Likewise, from the perspective of symbolic anthropology, Mary Douglas (1966) asserts that mythical stories serve the function of "classifying the pure and the impure," that is, of establishing social and cultural boundaries. The legend of Mother Monte participates in this classificatory function, as it delineates safe spaces from dangerous ones, acceptable behavior from reprehensible ones, and legitimate actors from illegitimate ones, according to the social context in which it is narrated. This function allows it to reconfigure itself to respond to new social anxieties, such as the fear of environmental collapse or territorial insecurity.

From a perspective closer to the emotional and existential dimension, the theory of place attachment, developed by Setha Low and Irwin Altman (1992), posits that stories about territory play a fundamental role in building emotional bonds with inhabited spaces. The legend of Mother Mountain acts as a narrative device that reinforces emotional attachment to the natural landscape, linking collective feelings with the need to care for and preserve the environment. In this way, the myth not only adapts to historical or social changes but also maintains its capacity to generate emotional identification with the territory.

Finally, from a philosophical perspective on narrative versatility, Martha Nussbaum (1990) argues that stories rich in symbolism allow people to indirectly explore the moral and existential dilemmas of their time. La Madre Monte, by integrating elements of warning, punishment, and redemption, offers a symbolic space where each generation can review its own ethical conflicts: from the irrational exploitation of nature to the ambivalence between material progress and respect for the environment.

The extraordinary adaptive capacity of the legend of Mother Monte reveals its nature as a profoundly versatile tale, capable of traversing different eras, political systems, and cultural changes without losing its symbolic essence. This myth has transitioned from colonial moral control to peasant resistance, from ecological pedagogy to the archetypal exploration of contemporary fears, seamlessly integrating into environmental discourses, urban narratives, and digital languages. Its permanence depends not solely on oral tradition but on its ability to engage with the multiple dimensions that shape human beings: the need for roots, the search for meaning in the face of environmental uncertainty, the yearning for territorial justice, and the symbolic exploration of one's own fears and desires. By adapting to these diverse scenarios, Mother Monte reaffirms that mythical tales are not static relics of the past, but living fabrics that accompany and shape social transformations, always offering a symbolic mirror in which communities can recognize themselves, question themselves, and project themselves toward the future.

VERSES OF ANCESTRAL FEAR

The legend of Mother Monte, deeply embedded in the Colombian popular imagination, represents much more than a cautionary folk tale. Its narrative, symbolic, and emotional potential makes it an open cultural structure, susceptible to reinterpretation, reinterpretation, and adaptation to diverse contemporary media such as film, theater, graphic literature, and even video games. This versatility is based not only on its symbolic richness but also on its ability to embody universal conflicts, collective emotions, and social tensions that transcend generations. Thus, Mother Monte is projected as a functional, malleable, and current myth, capable of offering multiple interpretations in the digital and audiovisual era.

From an anthropological perspective, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958) points out that myths possess a deep structure that allows them to be reformulated in different contexts without losing their symbolic core. In the case of Mother Mountain, this structure lies in her archetypal representation of Mother Nature, linked to punishment, fertility, regeneration, and territorial justice. This symbolic framework gives the myth exceptional flexibility, allowing it to transition from traditional peasant oral tradition to contemporary artistic and media languages, adapting without losing its essence.

In cinema, myth finds a fertile space to amplify its aesthetic and sensorial potential. Cinematic language, through resources such as visual atmosphere, ambient music, and rhythmic editing, can effectively recreate the central elements of the legend: the thick fog, the humid jungle, and the moss-covered face of the Mountain Mother. According to Laura Mulvey (1975), cinema not only represents but also organizes desire and fear, allowing viewers to collectively confront their repressed emotions. Thus, the film adaptation of the Mountain Mother would serve not only as a narrative act, but as a collective ritual where contemporary societies reaffirm their connection to ancestral archetypes.

Likewise, theater emerges as another ideal medium for reinterpreting the legend, thanks to its performative and symbolic capacity. Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) argues that theater, as a space for "carnivalization," allows for a momentary inversion of social and symbolic hierarchies, facilitating community catharsis. Staged representations of Mother Monte can update the myth in terms of ecological denunciation, social critique, or emotional introspection, appealing to the active participation of the audience. This playful and ritualistic dimension of theater connects with the ceremonial roots of mythical stories, transforming the stage into a space for symbolic reconnection between the community and its collective memory.

In the realm of video games, the legend of Mother Monte offers even broader possibilities for reinterpretation. The interactivity inherent to this medium allows the user not only to contemplate the story, but also to intervene in it, make decisions, and directly confront the dilemmas that the myth poses. Henry Jenkins (2006) argues that video games constitute " transmedia narrative spaces ," where stories expand across multiple platforms and allow for active participation in the construction of the narrative. A video game adaptation of Mother Monte could place the player in a jungle environment where they must solve ecological puzzles, face moral challenges, or navigate symbolic labyrinths, thus replicating the journey and learning structure that characterizes the myth.

Far from trivializing the story, these adaptations amplify its impact and relevance, bringing it closer to new generations accustomed to digital languages and immersive experiences. Marie- Laure Ryan's (2001) theory of the "expanded narrative world" argues that stories that can inhabit multiple media without losing their original identity present a high degree of " ontological immersion "—that is, the capacity to construct coherent universes in which the audience feels emotionally involved. La Madre Monte, with its symbolic density and deep connection to the Colombian landscape, possesses the necessary conditions to inhabit these expanded worlds, allowing new generations to explore the myth from diverse sensorial and narrative dimensions.

In literary and graphic terms, the legend also offers enormous potential for reinterpretation. Graphic literature, comics, and graphic novels allow for visual representations of the jungle, rivers, and the enigmatic figure of Mother Mountain, combining text and image to generate new interpretations. Scott McCloud (1993) highlights that comics are a unique narrative form, capable of condensing complex symbolism through the superposition of visual and textual planes. Thus, a graphic novel based on the legend could highlight contemporary ecological tensions, territorial conflicts, or cultural resistance, providing the myth with a powerful and accessible visual language.

Beyond the specific media, Mother Mountain's adaptability to diverse narrative formats is explained by her symbolic versatility and her roots in universal dimensions of the human being. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Carl Gustav Jung (1959) identified the presence of universal archetypes in myths that operate as mirrors of the collective unconscious. Mother Mountain embodies the archetype of the Terrible Mother, that ambivalent figure who offers protection but also punishment, and whose presence symbolizes the profound conflicts between humanity and nature. This ambivalence allows the myth to resonate with different audiences, offering multiple levels of identification, from the ancestral fear of punishment to admiration for the regenerative force of nature.

Philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1984) adds that mythical stories function as "models of action," that is, as symbolic guides that orient behavior and offer frameworks for interpreting the world. This explanatory function, combined with the story's symbolic openness, makes it easier for Mother Monte to be appropriated by diverse communities and generations, who reconfigure its meaning based on their particular experiences. Thus, the myth is not limited to being told; it is lived, dramatized, and recreated, maintaining its pedagogical and aesthetic power.

From an aesthetic perspective, Mother Monte's ability to inhabit different artistic media responds to what Hans-Georg Gadamer (1960) calls the "fusion of horizons," that is, the possibility for cultural works to dialogue with current contexts, renewing their meaning without losing their essence. This fusion of horizons is evident in the way the myth

articulates current issues such as the ecological crisis, the destruction of territory, or the loss of historical memory, offering a symbolic framework through which communities can reflect on their present.

Furthermore, the myth's ability to transcend orality and adapt to contemporary formats connects with Alasdair MacIntyre's (1981) theory of the "narrative self," which argues that human beings understand themselves through stories. By offering a narrative rich in symbolism and dilemmas, Mother Monte allows each person, regardless of age or background, to feel challenged and to recognize themselves in the journey, transgression, sanction, or reconciliation that the story proposes.

The legend also highlights the collective dimension of the mythical narrative, operating as an "identity device" that connects the community to its roots and its geographical and emotional environment. Anthony D. Smith (1991) argues that origin myths and ancestral stories are essential components of collective identity, as they allow communities to construct a shared narrative about their past and their place in the world. La Madre Monte, in its multiple adaptations, reaffirms this role, linking the myth to contemporary territorial and ecological awareness.

Exploring the adaptive capacity of the legend of Mother Mountain through diverse media such as film, theater, graphic literature, and video games reveals its extraordinary potential as a transmedia narrative , capable of embodying multiple dimensions of the human being. The versatility of the myth is not limited to its formal plasticity but is rooted in its ability to offer a symbolic framework where deep emotions, ethical dilemmas, territorial conflicts, and collective aspirations converge. Each medium offers a different way to inhabit the story: film, with its sensorial power; theater, with its ritual force; comics, with their visual condensation; and video games, with their immersive interactivity. However, the same symbolic essence underlies all these formats: Mother Mountain as a living metaphor for the relationship between humanity and nature, as an archetypal mirror of collective fears and desires, and as a narrative space where each generation can find a reflection of its own concerns and hopes. By adapting the legend to these contemporary forms, it reaffirms its

cultural vitality, demonstrating that myths not only narrate the past, but also engage with the present and shape the imaginations of the future, always inviting new readers, viewers, and players to lose themselves—and find themselves—in the mystery of the mountain.

RITES OF THE HIDDEN MOUNT

The legend of Mother Monte, one of the most deeply rooted tales in Colombian folklore, is not only a cautionary tale or a moral lesson; it also constitutes a symbolic element deeply linked to rituals, celebrations, and ceremonial practices that survive and are transformed in different cultural contexts. Its role within ritual dynamics reflects not only the traditional function of the myth, but also its ability to integrate into collective celebrations that fuse the ancestral and the modern. From this perspective, Mother Monte operates as a figure who transitions between mythical narrative and social ritual, articulating beliefs, fears, and communal ways of understanding the territory.

According to Mircea Eliade (1957), myth is not merely a symbolic narrative, but a story that grounds and legitimizes ritual practices, functioning as a model of sacred action periodically repeated by the community. In this sense, Mother Mountain is not merely a narrative figure, but a "ritual principle" activated in specific practices of interaction with nature. Within many rural Colombian communities, propitiatory rituals persist that seek to "appease" or "please" the protective spirits of the forest, where Mother Mountain is evoked as a symbol of respect and balance with the natural environment.

The ritual presence of Mother Forest is particularly visible in agricultural contexts, where the custom of making offerings or saying prayers before entering forested areas or beginning hunting, fishing, or logging trips persists. These ritual acts—which include sprinkling liquor, burning tobacco, or placing food at the edges of the forest—constitute a way of seeking permission from Mother Forest, who is conceived as the guardian of the forest and its resources. In the words of Arnold Van Gennep (1909), these rites can be interpreted as "ecological rites of passage," marking the transition from domestic to wild spaces, thus regulating the relationships between people and the landscape.

Furthermore, the legend is incorporated into local celebrations where the figure of Mother Mountain is represented through dances, parades, or popular dramatizations, especially in

festivities linked to water or the fertility of the land. In several municipalities in the Coffee Region, Tolima, and Antioquia, Mother Mountain appears in rural carnivals or patron saint festivals as a symbolic figure who parades or interacts with the public, reactivating her ceremonial dimension. Clifford Geertz (1973) argues that popular festivals are not mere spectacles, but "models of and for reality," where the community represents and reinterprets its fundamental values. In these festivals, Mother Mountain is not only a figure of ancestral fear but also a symbol of territorial identity and the spiritual connection to the mountain.

Likewise, the ritual dimension of the myth is expressed in syncretic religious practices, where Mother Monte is associated with figures from popular Catholicism, such as the Virgin of Remedies or the Virgin of Mercedes, both linked to the protection of water and nature. This symbolic overlap demonstrates the legend's ability to integrate elements from different spiritual traditions, creating a syncretism that reinforces its relevance. As Serge Gruzinski (1991) argues, mythical tales in colonial and postcolonial contexts tend to merge with the dominant religious iconography, generating new forms of popular spirituality where Indigenous, African, and European elements coexist.

In modern contexts, Mother Mountain has also been incorporated into urban rituals linked to environmental awareness and land defense movements. Environmental activists and groups have revisited the myth in marches, sit-ins, and symbolic events dedicated to river cleanups or the recovery of green spaces, transforming it into an emblem of environmental struggle. This connects with the idea of "new ecological rituals" developed by Bron Taylor (2010), who identifies how certain traditional myths are reinterpreted to promote contemporary ecological values, creating community practices where the spiritual and the environmental converge.

The ritual adaptability of Mother Mountain is also reflected in personal wellness practices, such as the nature reconnection rituals promoted by alternative spirituality. Holistic therapies, conscious walks, and river bathing ceremonies evoke the figure of Mother Mountain as a symbol of the regenerative power of water and vegetation. These current

uses of the myth embody what Catherine Bell (1992) calls "ritualization," a process by which people transform everyday practices into acts laden with symbolic meaning, thus redefining ancestral stories in a personal and communal sense.

From the perspective of ritual capital, developed by Manuel Vásquez (2011), mythical stories like that of Mother Monte function as "symbolic capital" that communities mobilize in specific contexts to build belonging, negotiate identities, or resist conflict. This perspective allows us to understand how myth persists not only as a narrative act but also as an active tool in the organization of community events and popular celebrations, where its presence reinforces both cultural identity and the ethical commitment to caring for the territory.

In contemporary practice, even cultural festivals and artistic events have begun to integrate Mother Monte as a central figure in ritual theater, ecological performances , or community art exhibitions. These cultural events, according to Victor Turner (1969), should be understood as "social dramas" where collective tensions and aspirations are represented, allowing the community to negotiate its values and fears through shared symbolic experience. Mother Monte, as the protagonist of these modern dramas, acts not only as an evocation of ancestral fear, but also as a mediator between historical memory, environmental awareness, and a sense of community.

This ritual dimension is also reinforced in educational contexts, where the legend is reactivated as a pedagogical resource in school projects linked to cultural heritage or environmental education. School dramatizations, storytelling festivals , and collective creation workshops around the myth allow new generations not only to learn about the story, but also to experience it and reactivate it through performative acts that have a ritualizing character . Based on Paulo Freire's (1970) theory of critical education, these spaces can be interpreted as exercises in "narrative awareness," where students not only reproduce a story but also appropriate its social and ethical meaning.

From a philosophical perspective and based on the human dimension of myth, Martha Nussbaum (1990) argues that symbolic narratives allow human beings to explore and represent their collective emotions in accessible and shared forms. Mother Mountain, when staged in community rituals or reinterpreted in environmental practices, offers a space for emotional identification where each participant can confront, understand, and reinterpret their relationship with nature, territory, and cultural memory.

On the other hand, from an existential perspective, Viktor Frankl (1946) emphasizes that people find meaning in their lives through meaningful acts and symbolic experiences that connect them to something greater than themselves. Rituals surrounding Mother Mountain, whether traditional or contemporary, offer precisely this possibility of connection with the transcendent, allowing the myth to remain alive not only as a story, but as a shared experience of meaning.

The legend of Mother Mountain, when incorporated into traditional rituals, popular celebrations, syncretic religious acts, and contemporary ecological practices, demonstrates a remarkable capacity for ceremonial adaptation that reinforces its relevance as a community symbol. Through these practices, the myth remains a source of social cohesion, cultural identity, and ethical reflection, allowing each generation to reinterpret it according to its own challenges and aspirations. Mother Mountain thus transitions between the ancestral and the modern, between celebration and protest, between peasant ritual and urban performance, demonstrating that her value lies not only in oral storytelling but in her ability to convene collective experiences that articulate fear, reverence, hope, and belonging. These rituals, far from being simple repetitions, operate as living acts that connect human beings with their territory, their memory, and their desire to build a respectful bond with the natural world, revealing that, in each celebration where the myth resurfaces, the profound awareness of our place in the web of life is also renewed.

SACRED CYCLE OF THE MOUNTAIN

The legend of Mother Mountain, deeply rooted in the Colombian collective imagination, is not limited to a simple tale of moral warning or punishment, but rather embodies a ritual and ceremonial function that remains relevant in ancestral practices and contemporary contexts. Since its origin as a myth linked to the mountain, water, and natural cycles, Mother Mountain has been a central figure in rituals of passage, healing, purification, and reconciliation with nature, displaying a versatility that has allowed it to transcend the boundaries of oral tradition and adapt to new symbolic frameworks.

In Mircea Eliade's (1957) theory, myths not only explain the world, but also establish and regenerate it through their ritual repetition. Mother Mountain, in this logic, represents an archetype linked to the natural order and ecological balance, whose evocation in rituals not only recalls her symbolic presence but also activates a process of spiritual restoration and renewal. This is evident in peasant practices in different regions of Colombia, where before entering jungle areas or rivers, propitiatory acts are performed, such as offerings of food or alcoholic beverages, addressed to the "owners of the forest," among whom Mother Mountain occupies a privileged place as a symbol of respect and harmony.

Arnold van Gennep (1909) identifies “rites of passage” as ceremonies that mark the transition between states or stages of life, such as birth, puberty, marriage, or death. Within several rural communities, Mother Mountain has been associated with these vital transitions, especially in rites linked to puberty or the beginning of adulthood. There are ethnographic records where young peasants are taken on “tests” or symbolic walks through the mountains, in order to “get to know the mountain” and learn the unwritten rules that govern their relationship with the ecosystem. In these contexts, the story of Mother

Mountain is not just a scary tale, but a ritual pedagogy that teaches respect for wildlife and the recognition of the physical and spiritual dangers of the territory.

Due to her association with water and lush vegetation, Mother Mountain has also been traditionally linked to healing and purification practices. In several municipalities of Tolima, Antioquia, and Santander, healers and ancestral scholars have invoked this figure during rituals involving baths with medicinal plants, cleansing with smoke, or ritual infusions, especially in ceremonies for "curing fright" or "curing mountain sickness." According to Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963), these rituals operate as "symbolic bricolages," where different elements—plants, prayers, gestures—combine to restore internal order to the body and external balance with the environment. Mother Mountain, as a protective and sanctioning figure, represents the power of the forest to heal or punish, depending on the attitude of the person seeking her intervention.

In a syncretic key, this legend has also been intertwined with popular religious practices. In celebrations such as the feast of San Juan or San Isidro Labrador, related to the agricultural cycle, Mother Mountain appears as an implicit symbol of fertility and abundance, as well as the guardian of water sources. Processions to the river, communal baths, and rain-invoking dances integrate symbolic elements where the figure of the myth remains latent, although it is not always explicitly named. As Serge Gruzinski (1991) argues, in societies where multiple cultural traditions coexist, mythical stories tend to be "hidden" within religious rites or festivities, thus maintaining their relevance as invisible forces that continue to shape daily life.

In contemporary urban contexts, the ritual function of Mother Mountain has been reinterpreted in terms of personal well-being, ecological activism, and alternative spirituality. Eco-spirituality movements, such as healing circles, nature reconnection walks, and river bathing rituals, have revived the myth as a symbol of purification, grounding, and personal transformation. Bron Taylor (2010) argues that in the modern era, "ecological spiritualities" are emerging that reinterpret ancestral myths to promote environmental stewardship and holistic health. Thus, Mother Mountain becomes an archetype of the

"wounded mother earth" who, when invoked in personal or collective healing rituals, restores the lost connection between humans and the ecosystem.

From Catherine Bell's (1992) theory of contemporary ritual, these new practices should not be interpreted as mere imitations of ancestral rituals, but as "ritualized strategies" that adapt tradition to current needs, integrating emotional self-exploration with community action. Ritual baths in rivers, speaking circles around the myth, or collective energy cleansings are examples of how legend is reinterpreted based on contemporary values such as self-care, environmental respect, and the search for inner balance.

Likewise, Mother Monte has acquired a ritual presence in contemporary artistic settings, including performances, installations, and symbolic theater works. These representations, far from trivializing the myth, reactivate it as an aesthetic ritual, where the boundary between art and ceremony is blurred. Victor Turner (1969) posits that ritual performances function as "liminal spaces," where everyday norms are suspended and participants experience states of transition and symbolic communion. In cultural festivals or artistic interventions, Mother Monte emerges as a symbol of collective transformation, inviting the audience to explore the boundaries between the rational and the mythical, the urban and the natural.

Even in alternative psychological therapies or somatic pedagogies, the figure of Mother Monte has been used as a metaphor for processes of "emotional cleansing," reconnection with ancestors, or liberation from traumas related to fear or sexual repression. From the archetypal psychology of Carl Gustav Jung (1959), myths are projections of the collective unconscious that, when symbolically activated, allow the integration of repressed aspects of the individual and collective psyche. Thus, rituals evoking Mother Monte, in her role as a terrible mother and protector of the threshold, function as catalysts for processes of self-knowledge and psychic transformation.

Contemporary philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2015) warns that in a performance-based society, marked by hyperproductivity and emotional disconnection, the search for rituals

that reactivate community and symbolic experience is increasingly intense. From this perspective, rituals linked to Mother Mountain represent a response to the contemporary need to reconnect with slower rhythms, with collective practices, and with a more harmonious vision of life. These ceremonies, whether in rural or urban settings, offer a space where time slows down, allowing participants to enter into contact with the sacred, understood not as dogma, but as a profound experience of communion with nature and community.

The ritual permanence of Mother Monte, both in ancestral practices and contemporary adaptations, demonstrates her capacity to embody processes of passage, healing, and purification that remain relevant in Colombia today. Far from being a static figure or relegated to the past, the myth remains relevant as a symbolic mediator between human beings and the land, between the physical and the spiritual, between ancestral fear and the modern desire for inner balance. Her presence in rural rituals, syncretic celebrations, acts of urban healing, and artistic performances demonstrates that the story continues to function as a bridge between worlds, as a symbolic guide for crossing life's thresholds, and as a ritual space where communities—and individuals—explore their connections with nature, memory, and their own emotions. Mother Monte, in every ritual bath, in every silent offering, or in every ceremonial dance, continues to activate processes of purification and rebirth, reminding us that myths, when embodied in practice, not only tell stories, but generate real transformations in the emotional and social fabric of those who evoke them.

EMOTIONS OF THE DEEP MOUNTAIN

The legend of Mother Monte, a symbol rooted in Colombian folklore, embodies a rich emotional and psychological dimension that transcends the merely narrative, positioning itself as a myth that evokes profound emotional responses in those who hear and evoke it. Its function within the collective unconscious is manifested through primary emotions such as fear, respect, admiration, and even nostalgia, generating an impact that remains in the rural and urban communities where its story still circulates. This emotional force responds to the complex symbolic structure of the legend and the way it articulates ancestral fears with contemporary conflicts, reaffirming the role of myth as a vehicle for psychological and emotional exploration.

From a psychological perspective, Carl Gustav Jung (1959) argues that myths are archetypal expressions of the collective unconscious, projecting the universal emotions underlying the human psyche. Mother Monte represents the archetype of the Terrible Mother, an ambivalent figure who combines protection and punishment, evoking contradictory feelings such as reverence, fear, and attraction. This dual nature explains why the story evokes both fear and respect, straddling the border between fascination and threat. According to Jung, these types of archetypes allow societies to confront repressed aspects of the psyche, such as fear of punishment, guilt, or the need for reconciliation with nature.

Robert Plutchik (1980), in his psychoevolutionary theory of emotions, proposes that human affective responses are organized around eight basic emotions: fear, anger, sadness, joy, surprise, aversion, trust, and anticipation. From this perspective, Mother Mountain primarily activates fear, understood as an adaptive emotion whose function is protection against threats. The legend, by describing an entity that punishes those who disrespect nature or transgress community norms, generates a preventive emotional response, reinforcing behaviors that respect the environment and social rules. However, the emotional reaction aroused by the myth is not limited to fear; it also evokes respect (related

to trust and submission), admiration (linked to surprise and fascination), and nostalgia, a complex emotion that blends sadness and joy over the loss of an idealized past.

In rural communities, the story of Mother Mountain is transmitted not only as a cautionary tale, but as a narrative that generates a deep respect for the territory and its guardian spirits. This respect is manifested in the way people relate to the natural environment, following rituals and care practices that reflect a deep-rooted ecological awareness. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958) argues that myths serve the function of organizing thought and social behavior by transmitting symbolic models. In this case, Mother Mountain acts as a symbol that channels respect for nature, integrating emotion into daily life and community practices.

On the other hand, the myth also inspires admiration, especially for its connection to the power and mystery of the natural world. The Mountain Mother, as guardian of the mountains and waters, embodies the majesty and regenerative power of the ecosystem, generating a response of awe and veneration. This emotion is activated not only in oral narration but also in visual and artistic representations of the myth, where her image is associated with fertility, abundance, and ecological balance. As Joseph Campbell (1949) posits, myths depicting powerful female figures inspire admiration because they connect with the creative and destructive energy of nature, allowing societies to establish a deep emotional connection with the cosmos.

Nostalgia is another emotion that emerges strongly around legend, especially in contexts where modernization has eroded traditional practices and direct contact with nature. In these cases, Mother Mountain becomes a symbol of an idealized past, where the relationship between people and the environment was mediated by respect and reciprocity. Anthony D. Smith (1991) argues that origin myths and local legends act as repositories of collective memory, allowing communities to reconstruct a sense of belonging and historical continuity. The nostalgia that myth awakens is not simply a passive longing, but a mobilizing emotion that drives the recovery of ancestral knowledge and sustainable practices.

This emotional dimension remains relevant even in contemporary urban contexts, where the legend has been reinterpreted in ecological and artistic terms. In cultural festivals, theatrical performances, and audiovisual productions, the figure of Mother Mountain continues to generate emotional impact, connecting with current concerns such as climate change, environmental destruction, and the loss of territorial identity. As Martha Nussbaum (1990) argues, emotions play a central role in the ethical and political formation of individuals, as they allow for a lived understanding of collective problems. The evocation of fear, respect, admiration, and nostalgia through myth facilitates the creation of a shared emotional awareness that articulates environmental care with cultural memory.

From the perspective of affective neuroscience, Antonio Damasio (1994) asserts that emotions are not only biological reactions but also cultural constructs that shape personal and social identity. In this sense, Madre Monte not only provokes fleeting emotions but also contributes to the formation of stable emotional patterns that guide individuals' ecological and social behavior. The repeated activation of emotions such as fear or respect around the myth reinforces the internalization of values such as water conservation, forest protection, and respect for community norms.

Likewise, legends play an important role in the emotional education of children and young people, as they constitute a symbolic vehicle for transmitting socially accepted emotions. Bruno Bettelheim (1976) points out that fairy tales and mythical stories allow children to process fears and internal conflicts symbolically, facilitating healthy psychological development. Mother Mountain, by representing punishment for disobedience or imprudence, functions as a pedagogical tool that teaches them to manage fear and develop prudence and respect for limits.

In the field of mental health, the myth has also been used as a therapeutic tool in community psychology and art therapy practices, where ancestral stories are explored to address repressed emotions or collective emotional conflicts. From this perspective, Mother Mountain acts as a symbol that allows difficult emotions to be channeled, such as fear of losing one's territory, ecological anxiety, or grief over environmental destruction.

The metaphor of the mountain as a sacred and threatening space facilitates processes of emotional catharsis and identity reconstruction, reinforcing the healing function of the myth in contexts of social and ecological vulnerability.

The emotional impact of Mother Mountain is ultimately explained by her ability to integrate multiple affective dimensions into a coherent narrative. As Robert Plutchik argues, complex emotions arise from the combination of basic emotions and their cultural modulation. The legend, by simultaneously activating fear, respect, admiration, and nostalgia, offers a symbolic space where people can explore their emotions in relation to their environment, community, and their own identity.

The emotional persistence of the legend of Mother Monte reveals the depth of its roots in the collective psyche and its capacity to mobilize fundamental emotions that remain relevant in the contemporary world. Through fear, respect, admiration, and nostalgia, the myth offers a symbolic framework for reflection on the bond between human beings and nature, reminding us that emotions are not only individual reactions but also social forces that shape behavior, memory, and identity. Mother Monte, by embodying these primordial affects, continues to summon communities to an emotional dialogue with their past, their territory, and their shared values, demonstrating that myths, far from being simple narratives of the past, are living structures that continue to shape collective sensibilities and offer keys to facing the challenges of the present with a deep and shared emotional awareness.

CATHARSIS OF THE HIDDEN MOUNT

The legend of Mother Monte occupies a prominent place in the Colombian collective imagination, not only as a traditional tale, but as a myth that functions as an emotional and psychological mechanism through which communities process their ancestral and contemporary fears. Its persistence is based on its ability to catalyze collective emotions linked to fear, guilt, respect, and the need for control in the face of the unknown, transforming it into a narrative tool of catharsis that contributes to psychosocial regulation. By activating deep emotions, the legend allows individuals and communities to confront, understand, and reconfigure their fears, becoming a symbolic space for the elaboration of social and environmental conflicts.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Carl Gustav Jung (1959) points out that myths are expressions of the collective unconscious, where the universal archetypes that structure human experience are projected. The Mountain Mother embodies the archetype of the Great Mother in its dark facet, linked to wild nature, territorial protection, and punishment for transgression. This figure awakens an atavistic fear of divine punishment and natural disorder, but also offers a path to symbolic reconciliation with the repressed. According to Jung, these types of stories operate as mechanisms of psychic integration, allowing individuals and communities to confront and transform their internal fears through identification with the myth.

Robert Plutchik (1980), in his psychoevolutionary theory of emotions, identifies fear as a basic emotion whose adaptive function is to protect the organism from threats. The myth of Mother Mountain, by presenting an entity that punishes those who disrespect nature or transgress social norms, activates fear as an initial response, but also promotes a more complex emotional process: catharsis. Plutchik argues that emotions can be intensified or combined to generate more complex emotions, such as anxiety or reverence. Thus, the fear aroused by the legend can be transformed into respect or into a ritualized form of emotional appeasement, facilitating social regulation and the prevention of destructive behaviors.

This cathartic process is evident in oral histories and community practices where the legend is told as a warning or lesson. As Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958) argued, myths not only explain the world but also symbolically resolve structural conflicts present in societies. Mother Mountain, by sanctioning disrespect for the forest, rivers, or communal norms, allows communities to channel collective fears related to the loss of control over the environment or the breakdown of social order. By listening to and recreating the legend, community members experience an emotional release that restores a sense of balance and security.

This cathartic function can also be analyzed through Aristotle's theory of catharsis. In his work *Poetics , Aristotle argues* that tragedies serve the purpose of purging emotions of fear and compassion through the symbolic representation of human conflicts. In this sense, the legend of Mother Monte acts as a "mythic tragedy," where collective fear is symbolically represented and resolved through the exemplary punishment that the mythical figure imposes on transgressors. The shared emotional experience of listening to the story generates a communal catharsis, where fears are processed and transformed into collective learning.

The legend also activates emotions linked to guilt, especially in contexts where social and economic changes generate tensions with the natural environment. Industrialization, deforestation, and environmental degradation have exacerbated the sense of loss and ecological guilt, which finds in Mother Mountain a symbolic figure who channels these feelings. Martha Nussbaum (1990) points out that emotions play a central role in social ethics, as they allow people to become aware of their responsibilities and ties to others. The evocation of Mother Mountain as protector of the environment generates an emotional effect that mobilizes ecological awareness and reinforces practices of respect and conservation.

From a social psychology perspective, Serge Moscovici (1961) argues that social representations are forms of collective knowledge that allow communities to process reality through shared symbols. Mother Monte, as a central figure in Colombian mythology, operates as a social representation of the fear of natural punishment, allowing communities

to process their fears surrounding environmental chaos, natural disasters, or the transgression of cultural norms. The repetition of the story in ritual or pedagogical contexts reinforces this cathartic function, integrating fear into a symbolic framework that facilitates its understanding and social acceptance.

In contemporary contexts, the emotional impact of Mother Mountain has been reinterpreted in an ecological and therapeutic sense. Environmental movements have revived the myth as a symbol of the struggle against ecological devastation, transforming ancestral fear into a mobilizing emotion for collective action. Bron Taylor (2010) argues that modern ecological spiritualities use traditional myths to generate empathy and commitment to the environment, creating new forms of catharsis that integrate environmental concern with emotional awareness. In this context, Mother Mountain is no longer merely a figure of fear, but a symbol of ecological justice that allows communities to process their collective fears in the face of the environmental crisis.

Also in the fields of psychotherapy and art therapy, the legend has been used as a tool for emotional exploration and the resolution of collective traumas. Viktor Frankl (1946) argued that symbolic stories allow people to find meaning in their painful experiences and transform suffering into personal growth. In group therapies, the evocation of the myth allows participants to identify their personal and collective fears, generating processes of emotional catharsis that strengthen community resilience.

From the perspective of affective neuroscience, Antonio Damasio (1994) argues that emotions are integrated processes that combine biological reactions with cultural learning. The fear aroused by Mother Monte is not merely an instinctive response, but an emotion shaped by centuries of cultural narratives and practices that have incorporated the myth into community emotional regulation. This emotional-cultural integration explains the myth's persistence as an effective mechanism for collective fear management.

The legend has also been adapted into modern media such as film, literature, and video games, where it maintains its cathartic function through the representation of symbolic

conflicts. In these versions, Mother Monte remains an ambivalent figure who confronts the viewer with their primal fears, but also with moral and ethical dilemmas related to environmental protection and social justice. This adaptability reinforces its value as an emotional tool, capable of generating catharsis in diverse audiences and cultural contexts.

The emotional power of the legend lies in its ability to evoke and process fundamental emotions, connecting the individual to the collective and the present to the past. As Robert Plutchik points out, emotions are survival mechanisms that allow people to cope with threatening situations, but they are also cultural constructs that transform and adapt to social needs. By activating fear and transforming it into respect, guilt, nostalgia, or ecological awareness, Mother Mountain functions as a mechanism of emotional catharsis that transcends time and space, allowing communities to process their fears and strengthen their social bonds.

Through its symbolic structure and narrative function, the legend of Mother Mountain continues to operate as an emotional vehicle through which individuals and communities confront their collective fears. Its ability to activate fear and guide it toward catharsis demonstrates that myths are not mere narratives of the past, but living emotional tools that allow us to explore, process, and transform our deepest social and psychological conflicts. Mother Mountain, as a protective and punishing archetype, continues to generate an emotional impact that articulates cultural memory with ecological awareness, offering a symbolic space where communities not only evoke their ancestral fears but also find ways to heal, reconcile, and strengthen themselves in the face of present-day challenges.

HERITAGE AND MYTHICAL ECONOMY

The legend of Mother Monte, a mythical figure deeply rooted in Colombian folklore, has begun to be recognized not only as an orally transmitted popular narrative, but also as a strategic resource within the cultural economy and heritage tourism. Its impact goes beyond the collective imagination, as it is being instrumentalized as a tourist attraction in various regions of the country, particularly those with a rich heritage of oral traditions and a strong territorial identity. From this perspective, the legend not only persists as a symbolic tale, but also becomes a cultural product capable of generating economic dynamics, opening up a debate on the commodification of culture and the accumulation of symbolic, social, and economic capital.

The incorporation of local myths into the economic circuit of cultural tourism is not an isolated phenomenon in Colombia. Authors such as Pierre Bourdieu (1986) warn that symbolic capital, understood as prestige and social recognition, can be converted into economic capital through the institutional and commercial appropriation of cultural expressions. In this context, Madre Monte has progressively transformed into a tourist attraction that capitalizes on interest in oral traditions, mysticism, and nature tourism, positioning itself as a profitable symbol for festivals, ecological routes, heritage fairs, and experiential tourism activities.

One of the fundamental pillars for understanding this phenomenon is cultural and heritage tourism, defined by UNESCO (2003) as tourism that "allows us to discover and enjoy tangible and intangible cultural heritage." In various regions of Colombia, such as Tolima, Huila, Antioquia, and Santander, the figure of Mother Mountain has been incorporated into tourist circuits that promote local identity through guided tours, theatrical performances, food fairs, storytelling festivals, and ecotourism routes linked to rivers and mountains associated with the myth. These events integrate the legend as part of the main attraction,

generating income through the sale of handicrafts, local cuisine, rural accommodations, and specialized tourist packages.

From David Harvey's (2003) critical perspective, this process can be analyzed as a mechanism of "accumulation by dispossession," where ancestral stories, which originally circulated in community spaces as common cultural assets, are absorbed by the tourism market and transformed into commodities. The commodification of Mother Mountain implies a displacement of the story from its original function as a tool for ethical and ecological transmission to a logic of cultural consumption, where its value is measured in terms of economic profitability and tourist appeal. However, this instrumentalization also generates opportunities for local economies, especially in rural areas that depend on tourism as a source of employment and economic development.

The debate on the commodification of myth becomes more complex when considering the orange economy, a concept popularized by Felipe Buitrago and Iván Duque (2013), who advocate the economic exploitation of cultural heritage as a driver of development. From this perspective, the inclusion of Madre Monte in tourism projects can be understood as a strategy for the economic valorization of intangible heritage, provided that the principles of authenticity, community participation, and sustainability are respected. This approach has fostered the creation of cultural enterprises that use the legend as a narrative axis to offer immersive experiences, where tourists not only consume a story but also actively participate in its reenactment through ecological walks, mythology workshops, nighttime shows, and ritualized ecotourism activities.

Myth-based tourism is also related to the construction of cultural destinations through the creation of "territorial brands" that integrate local symbolic elements. Anholt (2010) argues that a country or regional brand is strengthened when it is associated with distinctive symbols that evoke authenticity and cultural uniqueness. Thus, municipalities and regions have begun to integrate the figure of Mother Mountain into their brand narratives, presenting her as a symbol of identity, connection with nature, and local authenticity. This is reflected in the proliferation of tourism products that combine adventure activities and

mysticism, such as tours along trails supposedly "guarded" by Mother Mountain or sensory experiences that seek to evoke the mysteries of the legend in controlled environments.

However, the economic exploitation of the myth raises ethical and social tensions, especially when indigenous communities are not directly involved in managing the benefits generated by these activities. Zygmunt Bauman (2001) warns that liquid modernity transforms culture into an ephemeral consumer good, where traditional meanings are diluted by the logic of supply and demand. Under this logic, there is a risk that Mother Mountain will be trivialized or decontextualized, losing its symbolic value as a tale of ecological warning and territorial respect.

On the other hand, some community-based tourism models seek to counter this trend through local ownership and participatory control over tourism projects. The solidarity economy, as proposed by Jean-Louis Laville (2007), offers alternatives to the capitalist accumulation model, allowing communities to manage their cultural resources autonomously and equitably. Some successful cases in Colombia have demonstrated that it is possible to integrate the legend of Mother Mountain into tourist circuits managed by the communities themselves. The communities retain control over the narrative and directly benefit from the economic benefits, while strengthening their cultural identity and social fabric.

Furthermore, the figure of Mother Mountain has enormous potential to promote sustainable tourism and ecotourism, due to her close connection with nature and ecological respect. According to Weaver (2001), authentic ecotourism not only seeks to minimize environmental impacts but also promote environmental education and respect for local cultures. By centering tourism activities around the story of Mother Mountain, ecological awareness can be fostered among visitors, reinforcing her original role as guardian of the forest and protector of aquatic ecosystems. This turns the myth into an educational vehicle that connects the tourist experience with environmental conservation and local development.

In short, the economic and touristic use of the legend of Mother Mountain reflects a complex tension between cultural preservation and the commodification of heritage. On the one hand, its inclusion in tourist circuits has generated economic development opportunities for local communities, promoting productive diversification and strengthening regional identity. On the other hand, there are also risks associated with the trivialization of the story and the external appropriation of its economic benefits, which can void the myth of meaning if not managed with cultural and ethical responsibility.

The economic and tourism impact of the legend cannot be interpreted solely as a phenomenon of commercial exploitation. Mother Mountain remains a powerful symbol that, even in its touristic form, maintains its capacity to articulate memories, sensibilities, and community values. Its presence in the tourism market does not eliminate its function as an ancestral tale, but rather adapts it to new dynamics of cultural circulation, where the myth becomes an economic resource, but also a bridge between past and present, between tradition and modernity.

In this process, Mother Mountain continues to fulfill her role as a mediator between human beings and the land, although she now also travels along the routes of tourism and the creative economy. Her ability to generate economic, symbolic, and social value demonstrates that myths are not static entities, but living narratives that can be reinterpreted and adapted to new contexts without losing their power. Far from being a mere commodity, the legend remains a collective reference that articulates memory, the economy, and local identity, offering an opportunity to build development models where culture is not only consumed but also respected, protected, and reinvented for the benefit of those who inhabit and recreate it.

ECONOMY OF THE LIVING MYTH

The legend of Mother Monte, rooted in Colombian oral tradition and folklore, has acquired a prominent place in the cultural product scene in recent decades. Its ability to transcend narrative and become a marketable symbolic asset has been the subject of numerous debates, especially within the context of cultural economy and heritage tourism. In this process, the legend not only survives as a popular tale but also gives rise to a variety of cultural products ranging from handicrafts and books to festivals, plays, souvenirs, and transmedia narratives , creating a space where symbolic and economic accumulation converge.

Pierre Bourdieu (1986) warns that symbolic capital, a form of social power based on recognition, can be transformed into economic capital through processes of cultural commodification. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the case of Mother Monte, whose image and story have been repurposed as creative input in local and regional cultural industries. In Colombia, especially in departments such as Tolima, Huila, Antioquia, and Santander, the legend has been integrated as an aesthetic and narrative reference in the production of handicrafts, including masks, textiles, wood sculptures, ceramics, and leather products. These not only serve decorative functions but also embody collective memory and local identity.

The rise of the creative economy, or "orange economy," promoted by authors such as Felipe Buitrago and Iván Duque (2013), has reinforced the idea that local myths and legends constitute cultural assets capable of generating economic value. In this context, the figure of Mother Monte has been capitalized in publishing, with the publication of children's books, illustrated stories, anthologies of Colombian mythology, fiction novels, and academic works that reinterpret the myth from ecological, feminist, or historical perspectives. These works not only spread the legend to new generations but also fuel publishing markets seeking products with cultural "authenticity."

Beyond literature and crafts, the legend has also been incorporated into cultural festivals that combine entertainment with heritage appreciation. Festivals such as "El Camino de la Madre Monte" (The Path of Mother Mountain) and "La Semana del Mito y la Leyenda" (The Week of Myth and Legend) bring together tourists and local residents to participate in activities where the myth is reinterpreted through street theater, traditional dances, storytelling contests, folk music, and food fairs. These events, in addition to boosting the local economy through tourism, hospitality , and gastronomy, generate temporary employment and strengthen community cultural production.

David Harvey (2003), in his theory of "accumulation by dispossession," warns of the risk that these practices, although economically profitable, generate processes of symbolic dispossession and cultural alienation. The conversion of Mother Mountain into a tourist commodity or souvenir can distort its original function as a myth protecting nature and community balance, emptying it of its ethical and ecological content and transforming it into a mere commodity for mass consumption. Under this logic, communities could lose control over their own narratives, while external actors (businesses, governments, travel agencies) capitalize economically on the narrative.

However, other approaches maintain that cultural production based on legends can coexist with authenticity and respect for memory. George Yúdice (2002) argues that culture has moved from being understood as a form of symbolic expression to being considered a strategic resource for economic development. In this sense, Madre Monte can become a hub for the creation of sustainable cultural projects that strengthen territorial identity and empower communities. For example, community projects that create masks and textiles inspired by the myth not only generate income but also revitalize ancestral knowledge and promote the intergenerational transmission of memory.

Cultural products inspired by Mother Mountain are not only tangible objects; they also include audiovisual and digital productions that reinterpret the myth in a contemporary way. Documentaries, short films, podcasts, video games, and virtual reality projects have begun to explore the story from new perspectives, facilitating its circulation in digital

markets and attracting young audiences interested in mystery, horror, and ecological adventure. Henry Jenkins (2006), based on his theory of transmedia narrative , argues that mythical stories have a high capacity for adaptation to multiple platforms, allowing the legend to circulate in various formats without losing its central narrative essence.

This expansion into diverse media has opened up new economic opportunities for local creators, graphic designers, digital artists, and video game developers, who find in Mother Mountain an adaptable and commercially attractive archetype. These products, in addition to generating income, have the potential to strengthen ecological awareness by presenting the legend as a symbol of environmental protection, contributing to heritage education and the development of critical audiences.

From a critical perspective, Zygmunt Bauman (2001) warns about the cultural "liquidity" that accompanies the commodification of myths, where traditional stories become ephemeral consumer goods, stripped of their symbolic depth. However, this perspective does not exclude the possibility of balanced forms of cultural commodification, where economic appropriation coexists with symbolic preservation. The key lies in the active participation of communities in the creation, circulation, and marketing of cultural products, ensuring that the economic exploitation of myth translates into social benefits and the conservation of intangible heritage.

The debate on the commodification of the legend can also be framed within Guy Debord 's (1967) theory of cultural capital, which argues that contemporary society tends to transform everything symbolic into spectacle. According to this logic, Mother Monte runs the risk of becoming a tourist simulacrum, an aesthetic figure without real roots in collective memory. However, when festivals, books, or crafts based on the legend are designed and managed by local actors, cultural production can remain rooted in the community, avoiding the trivialization of the myth.

Cultural tourism and products derived from Madre Monte can indeed become tools for local development, but only if they are accompanied by participatory models and an ethical

approach that prioritizes respect for heritage. The challenge is to prevent the narrative from being reduced to a mere market object, and instead, to enhance its function as a vehicle for identity, memory, and environmental awareness, integrating it in a balanced way into the creative economy.

Today, the legend of Mother Monte travels through multiple channels: it remains in oral tradition, but also circulates in craft fairs, cultural festivals, literary productions, and digital platforms. These cultural products, far from eliminating the original story, reconfigure it to respond to the new interests of contemporary cultural consumers. The key lies in how communities manage the balance between economic profitability and symbolic preservation, so that Mother Monte remains, simultaneously, a living myth, intangible heritage, and economic engine.

This tour demonstrates that Mother Mountain is no longer just an ancestral myth, but a multipurpose symbol that, through the production of books, festivals, crafts, and new technologies, connects the past with the present and articulates memory, economy, and territorial identity. The economic exploitation of the myth, if developed with respect, community participation, and an ethical approach, can become a legitimate way to revitalize intangible heritage and strengthen local economies. Thus, the legend not only persists as a popular tale but also becomes a source of symbolic and economic capital, a reminder that myths, far from being remnants of the past, are living tools that continue to fuel creativity, the economy, and collective memory.

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